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ABSTRACT

This report presents the results of a survey of Louisiana and North Carolina college students and education officials to ascertain their perceptions regarding the use of minimum competency testing programs and to determine the effects of such programs on black students. Questionnaire and interview data were collected between September 1985 and March 1986. The majority of students, most of whom were black, felt that the competency tests were fair, necessary, and included content studied in school. They did not believe the tests motivated students to study harder or teachers to have higher performance standards for students. Nor did they think the tests caused students to change their course selections. In fact, they reported that the tests were too easy. The perceptions of Louisiana and North Carolina education officials regarding the use of competency testing were generally similar to those of the students. The report is divided into the following sections: (1) review of literature on testing; (2) background on competency testing programs in Louisiana and North Carolina; (3) methodology; (4) general findings; (5) student testing requirements and students' perceptions regarding competency tests; (6) education officials' perceptions and school district policies and practices regarding competency tests; (7) interrelationships among students competency test impressions, college enrollment status, aspirations, and personal and educational characteristics; (8) conclusions and implications. Also included are an extensive bibliography and six appendices which provide information under the following headings: State Testing Legislation, Study Sites, Questionnaire, Interview Protocols; and Tables (showing the test taking distribution in the states and other test data). (PS)

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School and College Competency Testing Programs: Perceptions and Effects on Black Students in Louisiana and North Carolina

A Report Submitted to the
Southern Education Foundation

Rodney J. Reed
University of California, Berkeley

March, 1987

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FOREWORD

The Southern Education Foundation and the family philanthropies which preceded it have had a special and continuing interest in the education of Black Americans for more than a hundred years. The Foundation has been concerned particularly with programs aimed at increasing and improving higher education opportunities for blacks in the South.

In April, 1974, the board of directors (renamed board of trustees in 1984) established a special project, the Higher Education Program, to address issues which were surfacing as a result of the then *Adams* v. *Richardson* case. Under this higher education component, the Foundation supported coalitions formed by citizens to monitor state desegregation plans, sponsored conferences and workshops, published papers, monographs and documents, and awarded general grants which focused specifically on achieving equity in higher education in the ten states affected by the *Adams* case.

In September, 1978, the Higher Education Program proposed concentrating a major portion of its allocation on a Research Task Force which was formed to plan a research agenda for the Foundation and to commission research projects. This body of six educators has commissioned over 25 studies since its inception; this document is presented as part of the Higher Education Program Research Series. Other publications which are part of the series are listed at the end of this report and are available to the public at a cost of $5.00 each.

SEF was able to expand its Higher Education Program as a result of receiving grants from 1983 to 1986 from the Ford Foundation; the publication of this report is made possible by the grants.

A list of other Foundation publications may be obtained by writing to the Southern Education Foundation.

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Executive Summary

Louisiana and North Carolina college students and education officials -- school principals, superintendents, state department of education directors of testing or research, college admissions officers or registrars -- were surveyed through questionnaires and interviews to ascertain their perceptions regarding the use of minimum competency testing programs and to determine the effect such programs have had on black students.

Louisiana and North Carolina were selected for this study because of their large populations of Black Americans, because of the diversity of public and private institutions of higher education located within their state boundaries, and because of the differences in their competency testing implementation schedule. North Carolina has used a high school graduation competency test since 1978. Louisiana, at the time this study was conducted, planned to use a 12th grade basic skills test in 1992. In June 1986 the Louisiana legislature mandated that 11th grade students take a competency graduation examination beginning with the 1988 school year.

Questionnaire and interview data were collected between September 1985 and March 1986. The questionnaire responding sample consisted of 536 (65 percent) college students in Louisiana and 437 (43 percent) college students in North Carolina. Thirty education officials, equally divided between Louisiana and North Carolina, were interviewed either in face-to-face sessions or via telephone. Although students surveyed were enrolled in Louisiana and North Carolina colleges and universities, they had graduated from high schools located in 174 cities within 36 different states.

The Louisiana colleges and universities attended by students who were surveyed were: Delgado Community College, Loyola University, Southern University, Baton Rouge, Southern University, Shreveport-Bossier City, and, Xavier University. In North Carolina the institutions were: Durham Technical Institute, Duke University, Mars Hill College, North Carolina A & T University, St. Augustine's College, and, University of North Carolina, Charlotte.

Although the two states were at different stages in implementing their public school minimum competency testing programs, students in both states who had taken a high school graduation competency test generally had similar impressions. No significant differences were found between students who had graduated from high schools located within or outside the individual states, between students classified as upper or lower division, full-time or part-time, black or white, and, male or female. In Louisiana, however, most students who report taking a high school graduation competency examination graduated from high schools outside that state since Louisiana had not yet implemented such a test.

With respect to other standardized tests taken, most North Carolina students report taking the SAT and Louisiana students the ACT during high school. The percentage of North Carolina students taking the SAT, however, was much greater than the percentage of Louisiana students taking the ACT.

The majority of students, most of whom were black, felt that the competency tests were fair, needed, and included content studied in school. Importantly, they did not feel the tests motivated students to study harder or teachers to have higher performance standards for students. Nor did they believe the tests caused students to change their course selections. In fact, they report that the tests were too easy.

Through the use of Log-linear analysis techniques, an examination of relationships between competency test perceptions of the combined sample of Louisiana and North Carolina students who had taken a high school graduation competency test and their personal and educational characteristics was undertaken. Several findings emerge:

-- student enrollment at a two-year rather than a four-year college is significantly associated with low socioeconomic family background based on family financial circumstances, parent's education, and parent's occupation; graduation from a public high school; enrollment in a general or vocational high school curriculum track; and, low grades in high school English and science. Moreover, if students worked and attended college within a 50 mile radius of their homes, then they were more likely to be enrolled in a two-year rather than four-year college.

-- Regardless of personal or educational background variables, students mainly aspire to careers and occupations classified as professional, technical, and kindred workers or managerial and administrative.

-- Educationally, most students aspire to the four-year college degree. Although the two-year degree is an aspiration of some students, comparatively few aspire to an advanced or professional degree. Degree aspiration shows some relationship with family socioeconomic (SES) circumstances and overall college gpa. Higher SES students and those with high overall college gpa's were more likely to aim for an advanced or professional degree than lower SES students and those with low overall college gpa's. Distance from home to college attending also appears to be related to degree aspiration. Students living within 50 miles of the college they were attending aspired mainly to the A.A. degree. Those living between 50 and 200 miles were more likely to aspire to the B.A. degree. Those living over 200 miles were more likely to aspire to the advanced or professional degree. Apparently, the further away from home students travel to attend college, the higher the college degree to which they aspire.

-- Students who are required to take a college graduation examination and possess a high level of confidence about passing it the first time are more likely to feel that the high school competency graduation test is fair, needed, aligned with the high school curriculum, and causes students to study harder than students whose confidence level about passing the college examination is low.

-- Students matriculating at two-year colleges were less likely to consider the high school graduation competency test to be fair and needed, to cover material covered in school, to believe the test to be too easy, or to cause them to study harder than students matriculating at four-year colleges.

-- Students aspiring to an advanced or professional degree or a four-year college degree were more likely to view the high school graduation competency test as being fair, being needed, covering material studied in school, causing them to study more diligently, and being too easy than two-year degree aspirants.

-- Students aspiring to professional and technical or managerial and administrative careers were more likely to agree that the high school graduation competency test was fair, needed, covered material covered in school, caused students to study harder but yet was too easy than students aspiring to careers classified as sales or clerical.

The perceptions of Louisiana and North Carolina education officials regarding the use of competency testing were generally similar. Although most officials interviewed were not directly involved in the development or selection of the competency tests used (North Carolina selected the California Achievement Test battery and Louisiana developed, with the help of outside consultants, its own test), they were satisfied with the test selection and validation procedures used. Most officials also felt that

-- school expectations are made clearer for students, teachers, and parents because of competency testing.

-- competency testing narrows the curriculum.

-- competency testing and uniform curriculum standards result in school program inflexibility. To meet the needs of many students, particularly those who are at risk, more flexibility was thought to be needed.

-- some teachers teach to the test.

-- parents incorrectly equate test scores with school quality.

-- the high school competency test does not discriminate on the basis of ability for college work.

-- most students pass the high school comptency test.

-- the gap between black and white student scores on the competency test has narrowed. It nevertheless continues to exist with black students earning scores below those of white students.

-- colleges and schools should combine their resources to address the problem of raising test scores of black students and getting more of them into college.

Policy implications suggested by the findings of the study designed to improve the performance of students generally and black students in particular are:

-- The curriculum should be expanded, teacher effectiveness enhanced, and school course offerings made available to all students. The quality of teaching must be excellent, the curriculum challenging, and the school environment supportive. Arbitrary classroom ability grouping and tracking should be eliminated and students challenged intellectually throughout their school careers.

-- Schools should assist students to recognize the linkage between educational attainment and life options. Role models and career and educational exploration are important in this regard.

-- Testing should be used for diagnostic purposes rather than to pass irreversible judgment on the placement of students in curriculum tracks, to determine grade promotion, or to decide whether a diploma should be issued.

-- Colleges and universities should become more actively involved in formulating strategies to identify a wide range of student talent and in providing support to schools and students to nurture and develop students' academic abilities. This will assist in curbing the high dropout rate among black students.

-- School programs should be available to meet diverse student needs in all schools. An enriched curriculum should not be the private domain of middle to upper socioeconomic status schools.

Acknowledgements

A study of this magnitude could not have been completed without the assistance and cooperation of many individuals to whom I am greatly indebted.

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Finally, full responsibility for this report is mine. The views expressed, therefore, may not reflect those of the Southern Education Foundation.

Rodney J. Reed
Berkeley, California
March 20, 1987

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The movement in American education from the mid 1970's to mid 1980's toward higher standards of achievement for schools and students and toward the imposition of testing requirements on students must be viewed within its historical context. Schools, no less than other social institutions, during this period came under great public scrutiny. Professionals in education, educational policy-makers, and students were asked to show that spending on public education was producing results which reflected the goals articulated in public policy and community expectations. The accountability drive that existed in the early to mid 1970's sought to measure school and student performance against policy and community assumptions. Scores on standardized tests administered to assess performance indicated that many students were performing below grade levels.

With pressure mounting from legislatures and taxpayers to reverse what appeared to be a steady drop in school achievement, educational policy-makers in a number of states decided that ambiguous educational goals and hazy performance standards could be blamed for this condition. Accordingly, legislation was adopted to increase high school graduation requirements, tighten up the curriculum (purging it of frivolous offerings), and establish grade-specific levels of curricular mastery. In this process, the accountability movement took a new turn -- from institutional assessment to individual certification. Standardized tests were to be used not only to measure the relative effectiveness of schools and educational policy, but also to certify that students receiving diplomas met minimum performance standards (Wise, 1978; Pincus, 1984; Ericson, 1984; Pullin, 1981; Haney and Madaus, 1978; Thurston and House, 1981; and Nathan and Jennings, 1978).

What has been the experience of black students with respect to these new requirements? Whereas overall pass-fail rates are reported within states for competency testing programs, little is known about what these students, as well as others, think about the new educational requirements. Nor is much known about how these new requirements are related to their educational and career aspirations. It is the purpose of this exploratory study, therefore, to examine the perceptions of college students and education officials in Louisiana and North Carolina regarding the use of competency testing programs and college requirements for upper division undergraduate study or for graduation. The study seeks further to examine the relationship between high school competency test performance and selected personal and educational characteristics of students.

Louisiana and North Carolina were selected for this study because of their large populations of black citizens -- Louisiana, 1,237,263 and North Carolina, 1,316,050 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980); because of the presence of predominantly black colleges and universities, both private and public and two- and four-year -- there are 6 such institutions in Louisiana and 13 in North Carolina (National Advisory Committee on Black Higher Education and Black Colleges and Universities, 1979); because both states have increased high school graduation course requirements; and because both states have implemented competency testing programs although their programs are at different stages of implementation. North Carolina requires passage of an eleventh grade competency test for high school graduation and has implemented an annual testing program at grades 1, 2, 3, 6, and 9. Louisiana, at the time this study was initiated, mandated the use of an 11th grade test by 1992. Basic skills grade promotion competency testing in Louisiana started in grade 2 in the spring of 1982. Subsequent higher grades were to be added each year until grade 12 was reached in 1992. New 1986 legislation, however, authorized testing in grades 3, 5, and 7 starting with the 1987-88 school year and at grade 11 beginning no later than 1988-89.

Rationale

The accountability movement began with a concern for equity. Were schools performing well for all students? It ended by stressing efficiency and excellence. As policy developed, the stress shifted in yet another direction. States not only established minimal criteria for student advancement and certification; they also set policies to challenge students at the higher end of the ability and performance spectrum (Pincus, 1984; Ericson, 1984).

The deteriorating effectiveness of the educational system is a repetitive theme in the literature on the standards movement. Proponents of the movement express indignation about the increase in "functional illiteracy" (a phenomenon which has been neither clearly defined nor measured), the persistent slide in scores on a number of widely used tests, the pervasiveness of social promotion, and the looseness of curricular requirements and school rules (Brickell, 1978; National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983; Gallagher, 1984; Levine, 1984). A number of writers have pointed to the decline in standards and have called for retrenchment as the means to excellence in public education (Simon, 1979; Turlington, 1979; Fisher, 1980; Time, 1979; Newsweek, 1979). Many educators came to similar views from observing poor student performances in school districts or the need for remedial help in basic skills among post-secondary students (Fisher, 1978; Kraetsch, 1980; Chronicle of Higher Education, December 2, 1981).

Public perception that the general quality of public schools nationally is less than excellent (Annual Phi Delta Kappan/Gallup Polls, 1969-1986), criticisms of public education in schools and colleges contained in national reports and studies (The National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983; the Twentieth Century Fund Task Force Report on Elementary Education and Secondary Education Policy, 1983), A Place Called School (1984), Investing in Our Children (1985), and until recently, for slightly more than a decade, the steady decline in scholastic aptitude test scores have formed the basis of the public outcry demanding school accountability.

In response, a majority of the states now require elementary and secondary school students to pass some form of proficiency examination or minimum competency test for grade promotion or high school graduation, complete an increased number of units in academic subjects for high school graduation, and participate in a longer school day and a longer school year. Several colleges and universities have raised entry requirements and require passage of a subject area examination for matriculation from lower division to upper division studies and for graduation. In addition, many of the states now require successful passage of a competency test for teacher certification or recertification (Hathaway, 1980; Euchner, 1984; Tarr, 1985; U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1985).

The demand for improvement in the quality of educational programs and schooling has been joined by politicians, parents, the business community, educators, researchers, educational organizations and agencies, and informed observers. It has been a demand for accountability reinforced with state legislation and new higher education policies designed, presumably, to increase the quality of education and the academic competency levels of elementary and secondary students.

Based on information compiled by Tarr (1985), thirty-nine states had enacted or were considering legislation requiring minimum competency testing by the beginning of 1985. Nineteen states have also raised education-school standards and ten have legislation to do so under consideration. Nearly all of the states (43) have raised high school graduation requirements and five are contemplating a similar action; fifteen require an exit test and five have such a requirement under review. Eight states have grade promotion tests and three states are considering their use. At the college level, seventeen states have raised admission standards in their public colleges and universities (Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah) and three others (Arkansas, Kansas, West Virginia) are considering raising them.

Competency testing for public school teachers has also been approved or is being studied in slightly more than two-thirds of the states. Teacher competency examinations have become standard practice or have been approved in Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, and Wyoming. Other states considering the use of general teacher competency tests include Illinois, Maryland, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, and West Virginia. In Iowa the state legislature passed a teacher testing bill that was vetoed by the Governor (Euchner, 1984; Lines, 1985).

The growth of the competency testing movement, which began in 1975 and 1976 in California, Florida, Oregon, and a few other states (Pipho, 1978), has been phenomenal. It has been a movement propelled primarily by politicians. Apparently they have been anxious to demonstrate to constituents their desire to respond to criticisms of the educational system. Thus, legislation to improve the overall quality of schooling, teachers, and students graduating from public secondary schools has been enacted with frequency.

School reform efforts also have been advocated by the business community, which generally has been alarmed by the inadequate preparation, particularly in the basic skill areas, of high school graduates who represent a significant cadre of the nation's future work force (Committee for Economic Development, 1985; Kirst, 1984). Importantly, these efforts have additionally been fueled by a national economic interest: to remain competitive in the world economy, the nation must have well prepared human resources.

Minimum competency testing programs are thought to restore public confidence in the schools, ensure that students acquire certain acceptable levels of education in reading, writing, and mathematics, and indicate to the public at large that tax supported schools are accountable for the quality of education students receive, at least in the basic skills areas. In general, minimum competency test performance standards are used to serve either of two purposes: making decisions regarding grade level promotion or determining high school graduation eligibility. More desirably, competency tests could be used as a diagnostic tool to identify areas of student weaknesses. Used with other sources of information, competency tests can be a valuable tool for diagnostic and prescriptive teaching.

Whereas the preceding views can be regarded as advantages of minimum competency testing, several disadvantages can be noted. At one level, competency testing programs may restrict the curriculum in basic skills to those content areas contained in the test. Moreover, there is the ever present danger that in teaching for passage of competency tests, minimum acceptable levels of performance will be internalized by students and teachers as maximum levels of expected achievement (Lazarus, 1981). This may be particularly true for students who have traditionally experienced little success in school.

At another level, minimum competency testing demands that a passing score be established. Scores below established passing standards labels students as being incompetent. Reliance on a single test score to make such a determination should be viewed with trepidation. There can be little justification for the use of a single judgmental score to draw the line between the competent and incompetent. Given the statistical nature of testing, an individual's true test score could vary plus or minus several points. Moreover, extreme scores will regress toward the mean given repeated administrations of the test with the same population.

At yet another level, the use of minimum competency testing places the burden on the student and reduces the responsibility of the school and institutions of higher education in which teachers are prepared (Madaus, 1985). Students learn in classrooms in which effective teaching is evident. Thus, the quality of teaching and instruction must also come under scrutiny.

It is assumed by many that the use of competency testing has had, and is having, an adverse effect on students who are at risk because of poor economic circumstances, non-supportive neighborhood and school environments, a lack of role models, and an inability to equate success in school with success in the marketplace. Unfortunately, these students are poor whites, blacks, Hispanics, and Native Americans. Thus, while many may view competency testing in the manner described by Madaus (1985) as "the amazing grace that will save the world from illiterate graduates" (p. 615), these tests have served to further distinguish between the "haves" and the "have nots." When competency testing programs are combined with increased academic course requirements for high school graduation, higher entry requirements for college, new and higher level test performance mandates for movement from college lower division to upper division, and for college graduation, the question must be raised as to whether these requirements have a negative effect on students who begin their educational careers at risk.

By 1990, minorities of all ages are expected to constitute twenty to twenty-five percent of the national population; among youth cohorts, thirty percent. These individuals will be important for maintenance of a viable work force and the national economy. To the extent that the new standards as currently implemented become obstacles to the educational and career aspirations of students who already are at risk, serious consideration should be given to alternative and more effective ways of ensuring educational accountability. If the new requirements further penalize economically disadvantaged students because of school and environmental conditions to which they are subjected, then the requirements should be revised and reformulated. Gains in educational access and the subsequent expansion of occupational and career options experienced by economically disadvantaged students, particularly those who are black, Hispanic, and Native American, during the mid 1960's to mid 1970's should not be eroded during the 1980's and beyond.

In general, public school students from poor families tend to score at the lower end of competency test rating scales. Thus, competency testing programs appear to further distance them from the primary academic programs of the school and from highly skilled technical and vocational areas. The perceptions of college students, particularly black students, and professional educators in Louisiana and North Carolina with regard to the use of competency tests generally and the effect they have on educational practice are thus considerations which should be examined.

Research Questions

To address these matters, a series of descriptive and relational questions have been formulated. Six categories of information provide the basis for the descriptive questions used in this investigation as follows:

I. Competency Testing Program Background Information

   A. History and nature of high school graduation, college lower division, and college exit examinations.

      1. When testing programs began.
      2. Enabling legislation and intent.
      3. Test development and validation procedures.
      4. Potential social and cultural bias in the tests.
      5. Minimum passing score on various tests.
      6. Test content.
      7. Test length.
      8. Use of test results (e.g., diagnosis, remediation, course grading, recommendations for college attendance, grade retentions).
      9. Policy on retaking tests if failed initially.
      10. Funding for remediation because of test failure.

   B. Competency test policy for special education students.

   C. Percentage of students passing the high school competency examinations by ethnicity and sex.

II. General Student Background Information

   A. High school curricula studied by students in the study sample aggregated by sex within ethnicity.

- B. Average high school grades earned by students in the study sample.
- C. College class status of students in the study sample.

III. Influences on College Access for Black Students

- A. Type of college in which enrolled in relationship to type of high school attended, college, and personal characteristics.
- B. Student enrollment in two- or four-year first choice colleges as related to
  1. high school grades,
  2. high school curriculum studied,
  3. family financial circumstances,
  4. family educational background,
  5. geographical distance of college from family home,
  6. competency test results (when test required).
- C. Effect of college lower division test performance (when required) on continuation into upper division college studies.

IV. Educational and Career Aspirations of College Students

- A. Educational and career aspirations of students.
- B. Undergraduate major choices.
- C. Changes that have occurred in undergraduate major choices.
- D. Level of satisfaction with current major field.
- E. Relationship between career aspiration and undergraduate major.

V. Competency Testing Program Perceptions of Students

- A. Feelings about the use of high school graduation competency tests.
- B. Confidence about passing college competency examinations when required.

VI. Competency Testing Program Perceptions of School Administrators, State Department of Education and College Officials

A. Level of satisfaction with the use of competency or proficiency examinations in the schools or colleges.

B. Perceived advantages and disadvantages of competency examinations as used in the school or colleges.

C. Effect of competency examination policy on teachers, staff, students, parents, and the community.

D. Accuracy of competency tests in measuring what is important or essential for students to know.

E. Amount of teacher effort and school (college) resources directed to student competency test taking.

F. Practices regarding teaching to the competency tests.

G. Remedial efforts provided for students who fail the competency examinations.

H. Responsibility of teachers for students who fail the competency examinations.

The questions on relationships pertain to Louisiana and North Carolina college students' perceptions of competency tests as a function of their personal and educational characteristics. These questions focus upon the relationships among these factors:

1. Student's level of confidence in passing college competency graduation examination and ethnicity, gender, overall college gpa, college major gpa, high school gpa in selected subjects, type of high school curriculum studied, number of times taking high school competency graduation test before passing it, family economic circumstances, family occupational status, family educational level, college class level, college selection choice, college major, college employment status, and college financial circumstances.

2. Enrollment in a two- or four-year college and ethnicity, gender, number of times taking high school competency graduation test before passing it, type of high school attended, type of high school curriculum studied, high school gpa in selected subjects, family financial circumstances, family occupational status, family educational level, geographical distance of college to family home, college selection choice, college major, college employment status, and college financial circumstances.
3. Student's career aspiration and ethnicity, gender, number of times taking high school competency graduation test before passing it, type of high school attended, type of high school curriculum studied, high school gpa in selected subjects, family financial circumstances, family occupational status, family educational level, college class level, college selection choice, college major, college employment status, and college financial circumstances.
4. Student's educational aspirations and ethnicity, gender, number of times taking high school competency graduation test before passing it, type of high school attended, type of high school curriculum studied, high school gpa in selected subjects, family financial circumstances, family occupational status, family educational level, college class level, college major, college selection choice, college employment status, and college financial circumstances.
5. Student's perceptions regarding the high school competency graduation examinations and ethnicity, gender, type of high school attended, type of high school curriculum studied, high school gpa in selected subjects, college gpa, level of confidence in passing a college competency graduation examination, enrollment in a two- or four-year college, educational aspirations, and career aspirations.

Operational Definitions

Career aspiration - the career or occupational goal to which students aspire. Career choices are categorized through the use of the 1980 U.S. Census major occupational groupings.

College employment status - refers to amount of time students work during college years.

College class level - lower (first two years) or upper division (third through fifth year) standing in the college attending. Determined through self report of students.

College financial circumstances - how student's college education is financed. Indicated through question categories included in the student questionnaire.

College major - student's undergraduate major field of study.

College gpa (overall) - student's self report of overall college grades earned. Grade point average determined on a four point scale.

College major gpa - self report of college grades earned in students' undergraduate major field. Grade point average determined on a four point scale. High gpa = 4.0 to 3.1; average = 3.0 to 2.1; low = 2.0 and below.

College officials - administrators thought to be familiar with the effects of the competency testing programs on students at their institutions. These administrators include college admissions officers and directors of testing or student research.

College selection choice - whether students are currently attending the college that was their first, second, or third choice.

Educational aspiration - refers to the highest college degree to which students aspire: A.A.; B.A.; B.S.; B.D.; J.D.; L.L.B.; M.A.; M.S.; M.B.A.; M. Div.; M.D.; D.D.S.; D.V.M.; D.O.; Ed.D.; Ph.D.

Ethnicity - self report of major ethnic group to which respondent belongs.

Family financial circumstances - self report of relative financial resources family had while student was growing-up.

Family educational level - highest education level completed by student's parents or guardians. Indicated on education level scale included in the student questionnaire.

Family occupational status - primary type vocation held by parents or guardians during time student was growing up. Indicated on an occupational scale included in the student questionnaire.

Geographical distance of college from home - mileage between the student's family home and college currently attending.

High school gpa in selected subjects - self report of grades earned in English, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. Grade point average determined on a four point scale. High gpa = 4.0 to 3.1; average = 3.0 to 2.1; low = 2.0 and below.

High school competency tests - refers to the state required examination for high school graduation. At the college level, the required examination for advancement from lower to upper division studies and for graduation. These examinations are frequently referred to as minimum competency tests.

Level of confidence in passing college competency examination - how confident students feel about passing college competency examinations when required to advance from lower to upper division work or to graduate. Indicated by responses to questions included in the student questionnaire.

Number of times taking high school competency graduation test before passing it - self report of whether required high school competency test was passed either first, second, or third time the student took it, or whether it was passed at all.

School administrators - school principals, superintendents, and school district directors of research.

State department of education officials - directors of testing or research.

Student perceptions regarding high school competency tests - impressions of students concerning the fairness of high school competency tests, their effect on students and teachers, and student selection of courses. Indicated by responses to questions included in the student questionnaire.

Type of college attending - refers to attendance at colleges in the following categories:

a. Historically, predominantly black, public, four-year college or university.
b. Historically, predominantly black, private, four-year college or university.
c. Historically, predominantly white, public, four-year college or university.
d. Historically, predominantly white, private, four-year college or university.
e. Historically, predominantly black, two-year colleges.
f. Historically, predominantly white, two-year colleges.

Type of high school attended - public, private, or parochial jurisdiction.

Type of high school curriculum studied - general education; academic or college preparatory; agricultural occupations; business or office occupations; distributive education; health occupations; home economics occupations; technical occupations; trade or industrial occupations.

Organization of Report

In this first chapter, the general framework of the study and the research questions of interest have been indicated. Chapter 2 provides a comprehensive review of the pertinent literature on competency testing and the issues surrounding it. Chapter 3 discusses the historical background and current status of student competency testing in Louisiana and North Carolina. The methodology of the study is described in Chapter 4; Chapter 5 provides a portrait of the responding sample. Student perceptions regarding the use of competency tests are reported in Chapter 6, and those of education officials in Chapter 7. The findings relative to the research relationship questions are provided in Chapter 8. Chapter 9, which concludes the report, discusses the findings and their policy implications.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE*

Introduction

The intent of this review is to elucidate the effects performance standards, established since the mid 1970's, have had on students. Of particular concern is evidence regarding the impact these standards have had on educational and career opportunities of minority students. The review focuses on new assessment and proficiency testing programs, changes in high school graduation requirements, changes in college admission requirements, and policies for testing post-secondary students at entry, at advancement to upper division standing, and at graduation. Although by no means exhaustive, the search covers pertinent literature published from 1973 to 1985.

The review uncovered few writings that directly addressed the influence of new standards or competency testing programs on student attainment and on minority student opportunities. Articles that addressed the results of new policies contained limited, frequently anecdotal, evidence. The literature is dominated by advocacy articles explicating the philosophical justifications for competency testing programs or increasing performance standards. Rival positions on the value and necessity of the policies are developed, citing the benefits or harm they would produce, particularly for minority youth. No reports of large scale research and evaluations of competency testing policies were discovered. Thus, anecdotal material or scattered local findings must suffice for examining the important issues of equity and education buried in the implementation of competency testing policies.

The dearth of research writing on these themes is itself an important finding. It also has led to an organizational arrangement for this review that differs from the structure suggested by the topics of interest stated earlier. Although these topics are discussed, they are included within the framework of the following broad categories:

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* This chapter was substantially prepared by Brian Powers, doctoral candidate in Sociology, University of California, Berkeley, and Research Assistant with this project.

1. The status of new performance standards: policies, initiatives, rationale, and opposition.
2. Data-based findings of the educational consequences of the new standards.
3. Advocacy articles: pedagogical, sociological, educational, ethical, political, and legal issues raised by supporters and critics of the standards policies.
4. Legal issues and new standards policies: judicial review of policies for their effects on due process and civil rights guarantees.

The Status of Performance Standards: Policies, Intiatives, Rationale, and Opposition

The accountability movement that both preceded and launched the standards movement has been described by a number of writers. Some link it explicitly to the demand for competency tests. Two works in particular, Ericson (1984) and Pincus (1984), focus on the relationships between the proficiency movement and the excellence movement, and how both relate to conservative political responses to the perceived failures of liberal reform. For both Ericson and Pincus, institutional accountability, as specified in the mandates of the early 1970's, was an interim policy goal.

Wise (1978) contends that the accountability movement embodied a sharp managerial focus on efficient organizational and institutional performance that sought results (or outcomes) in the form of students' mastery of curricula. Such a perspective, he claimed, along with Cohen and Haney (1980), was not sympathetic to the social goals behind the educational initiatives of the 1960's.

The importance of organizational performance for accountability proponents led to the measurement of institutional performance with available tests and other standard protocols for comparing aggregate performance on specific tasks. From there it was a simple step to viewing individual student performance as a legitimate measure of institutional well-being.

Wise (1978), Pincus (1984), Ericson (1984), Pullin (1981), Haney and Madaus (1978), Thurston and House (1981), and Nathan and Jennings (1978) contend that the shift in the use of tests as institutional controls to student controls constituted a convenient way to quietly shift responsibility for the perceived drop in performance from schools to individuals. Low achievement came to be seen not as an expression of defects in the design and organization of teaching in schools but as defects in student application and instructor motivation (Cohen and Haney, 1980).

The nationwide "competency" movement of the 1970's received its greatest impetus in Florida. Here the state legislature passed the Educational Accountability Act in 1976. The Act called for multi-grade-level assessments, including a test of proficiency in the basic skills in the eleventh grade, which had to be passed for a student to receive a high school diploma. Florida was not the first state or community to use high school tests as hurdles to the diploma. However, its stature as a pioneer in the standards drive arises from the panoply of mechanisms for enforcing and measuring standards embraced by its legislature. The mechanisms included tests, new methods of cost accountability and site management, high graduation requirements, and more rigorous post-secondary requirements. Building on the statewide assessment program, the state legislature also specified that individual performance standards on the tests be set.

The historical and administrative details of Florida's program have been much described (Fisher, 1980, 1978; Turlington, 1979; McClung, 1980; Lazarus, 1981). With some variation in administrative detail, other states followed the lead of Florida, including North Carolina in 1977 and Louisiana in 1979. In ensuing years more states passed proficiency legislation. According to Pipho and Hadley (1984), of the 39 states that had implemented some version of a competency testing program by 1984, 20 of them required states to set performance standards and mandated that local school districts enforce them.

In 10 states, local school districts are required to set and enforce their own standards. In seven states, a combination of state and local authorities determine testing policies.

According to data reported by the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (1985), and displayed in Table 2.1, as of 1984 17 states, including North Carolina, explicitly required the passage of a proficiency test as a condition for high school graduation. In four states, it is left to local districts to choose to use test scores in this way. In five states, including Louisiana but not in North Carolina, tests are used to determine eligibility for grade promotion, and in two states such use is a matter of local choice. In 19 states, test results are to be used explicitly to identify students in need of remediation. In 24 states, tests are administered at least once to students in high schools; in California, to tenth and eleventh graders and to all students 16 years and older; in North Carolina, to eleventh graders; and in Louisiana, testing for eleventh graders has been mandated to begin no later than the 1988 school year. The first year a graduating class was subject to the diploma sanction in North Carolina was 1980. In Louisiana, it will be 1988.

This patchy pattern in the control of testing programs, in mandates for their use, and in stipulations on testing frequency and the grade levels subject to testing indicates the difficulty in generalizing about "testing programs" and the new standards movement. Indeed, the variation in details of testing administration is reflected in the variety of instruments measuring proficiency, in the selection of realms of knowledge viewed as indicative of proficiency, and in the determinations of cut-off scores to distinguish those passing from those failing (Haney and Madaus, 1978; Neill, 1979; Baratz, 1980; McClung, 1980; McCarthy, 1983).

There has been little consensus within the academic community about the validity and reliability of competency tests and the areas of competence students can legitimately be expected to master. The courts, however, in litigation over Florida's program, have ruled

TABLE 2.1

States Using Minimum-Competency Testing, by Government Level Setting Standards, Grade Levels Assessed, and Expected Uses of Standards: United States, 1984

States Using Minimum-Competency Testing	Government Level Setting Standards	Grade Levels Assessed	Expected Uses					First Graduating Class Assessed
			Grade Promotion	High School Graduation	Early Exit	Remediation	Other	
Alabama	State	3, 6, 9, 11		X		X	X	1985
Arizona[1]	State/local	8, 12	X	X				1976
Arkansas[2]	State	3, 4, 6, 8	X			X	X	
California	State/local	4-11, 16 yr. old +	X	X	X	X		1979
Colorado	Local	9, 12		Local option				
Connecticut	State	4, 6, 8				X	X	
Delaware	State	1-8, 11		X			X	1981
Florida	State/local	3, 5, 8, 11	X	X	X			1983
Georgia	State	1-4, 6, 8, 10 +		X				1985
Hawaii[3]	State	3, 9-12		X		X	X	1983
Idaho	State	8 +				X	X	1982
Illinois	Local	Local option					Local option	
Indiana	Local	3, 6, 8, 10				X	X	
Kansas[4]	State	2, 4, 6, 8, 10					Local option	
Louisiana[5]	State	2, 3, 4, 5, 11	X	X		X	X	1989
Maryland	State	3, 5, 7, 8, 9		X		X	X	1982
Massachusetts	Local	Local option					X	
Michigan	State	4, 7, 10				X	Local option	
Missouri	State	8-12					X	
Mississippi	State	3, 5, 8, 11		X			X	1987
Nebraska	Local	5 +					X	
Nevada	State	3, 6, 9, 11		X		X		1982
New Hampshire[6]	State	4, 8, 12	Local option	Local option			Local option	
New Jersey	State	9-12		X		X	X	1985
New Mexico	State	Local option, 10-12					X	1981
New York	State	3, 5, 6, 8-12		X		X		1979
North Carolina	State	(1-3, 6, 9), 11		X			X	1980
Ohio	Local	Local option					Local option	
Oklahoma	None	3, 6, 9, 12					X	
Oregon	State/local	Local option		X				1978
Pennsylvania	State	3, 5, 8				X		
South Carolina[7]	State	K-3, 6, 8, 11	X	X		X	X	1990
Tennessee[8]	State/local	4-6, 8, 9-12		X		X	X	1982
Texas[9]	State	1, 3, 5, 7, 9		X		X		1986
Utah	State/local	Local option, 11, 12		X		X		1980
Vermont	State	1-12		X			X	1981
Virginia	State/local	K-6, 10-12		X			X	1981
Wisconsin	Local	1-4, 5-8, 9-10		Local option		X		
Wyoming	Local	Local option				X		

[1] Legislation in 1983 calls for Arizona to develop a minimum course of study and criteria for high school graduation standards and for grade-to-grade promotion criteria. Local school districts are to implement standards.

[2] In 1987, a minimum competency test will be administered for 8th grade promotion.

[3] For high school graduation requirements, students have 3 options: paper-pencil test; performance test; or course. First time taken (grade 9) must be paper-pencil test.

[4] The Kansas Minimum Competency Assessment (MCA) was reestablished by 1984 legislative action (S.B. 473). The MCA will be in effect 1984-85 through 1988-89.

[5] Louisiana will add 8th grade beginning with 1986-87 school year and will implement a graduating test for 11th graders in 1987-88.

[6] New Hampshire requires that students be tested in elementary, middle and high school. Some local districts test at grades other than 4, 8 and 12.

[7] The South Carolina Education Improvement Act of 1984 specifies that the 11th grade test being used to gather baseline data will be replaced in 1985-86 school year with an exit exam in the 10th grade. All students graduating in 1990 and after must pass the exam.

[8] Local districts in Tennessee must test students in grades 4 or 5 or 6, and 8 for remediation purposes.

[9] Requirements described above become effective in 1985-86 school year.

NOTE: Some States recorded dates for first high school graduating class to be assessed, but did not record expected use for high school graduation. Tabulation excludes District of Columbia.

SOURCE: Education Commission on the States, Department of Research and Information, *Clearinghouse Notes*, "State Activity—Minimum Competency Testing," December 1984; and U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, unpublished tabulations (January 1985).

Reported in U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. The Condition of Education, 1985 Edition. A Statistical Report. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1985, p. 68.

against tests of "general knowledge" and "life skills." In the opinions of the courts, material covered in the tests must be taught in the schools (Debra P. v. Turlington, 1981; Citron, 1982).

The experience of Florida in the testing movement influenced programs in other states, particularly via court rulings that modified its program and thus defined competency testing boundaries. The two most influential issues from the Florida litigation concern the racially discriminatory effects of the tests and the nature of the curriculum presented to students tested.

Civil rights advocates challenged the Florida program, particularly the diploma sanction, as depriving students of the benefit of their education. Seventy-eight percent of all black students failed one or both parts of the test, compared with 25 percent of the white students in its first administration, Fall, 1977 (Fisher, 1980). Disparity in passing rates eventually appeared in North Carolina and Louisiana as well (Serow and Davies, 1982). Such a failure rate is open to many interpretations. The most compelling explanations for poor performance that do not "blame the victims" fall in two categories: first, students' educational backgrounds do not prepare them well enough to handle the test material and the test situation, and, second, tests are biased in subtle ways -- they presuppose linguistic and cognitive styles that many poor minority students do not develop either at home or through the schooling availed them. This controversial subject has been heavily debated, with many viewpoints adding fuel to the interchange, but having little effect on opinions.

In the context of the overall drive to institutionalize new standards and limit advancement through school to merit, it became clear that minority students were being overwhelmingly adversely affected by testing sanctions. Students were to be deprived, at the eleventh hour, of the credentials toward which many had diligently, if ineffectively, worked. In several states whose schools had only recently been desegregated, a large number of black students were threatened with sanctions that would harm their life chances as much as had school segregation.

The prospect of threatening students by applying color-blind standards of merit in such a way that students of a certain ethnicity could not meet them provoked the legal challenge in Florida. The Florida case (Debra P. v. Turlington, 1979) questioned the right of the state unilaterally to require the tests, to set passing scores, and to impose sanctions such as grade retention and diploma withholding. The chief grounds for the challenge were Fourteenth Amendment guarantees of due process and of equal protection under the law. The state vigorously fought back in challenge to requests that sanctions be delayed in order to prepare students for the tests over time as a component of their educational requirements.

The Florida case, Debra P. v. Turlington (474 F.Supp. 244, 1979; 644 F.2nd. 397, 1981), was decided in the Federal District Court and, on appeal, in the Fifth Circuit Court. The court upheld the right of the state to impose testing requirements and also sanctions on students failing the tests. It found no evidence of bias in the test content nor of malevolence in the racial disparity in test results. However, the appeals court favored the claims of plaintiffs that their education before 1971 had taken place in a segregated, inferior, dual school system and that their academic performances in high school were adversely affected by substandard schooling in basic educational areas -- English, mathematics, reading, and writing. Without evidence that black students had acquired foundations in the basic skills equivalent to those of white students, the application of so-called color-blind sanctions to previously victimized black students appeared to the court arbitrary and unfair. Importantly, the court ruled that students who had dutifully attended school and met all other requirements for graduation had a proprietary entitlement to a diploma. The court ruled against the diploma sanction, but for only four years, i.e., until the 1982-83 school year when twelfth grade students would have completed all their Florida public school education in desegregated schools. It warned the state that adequate notice of the imposition of additional requirements for graduation had to be provided to students; and, most critically, it required that the tests examine students only on material taught in the classroom.

The Debra P. rulings cleansed the testing programs in Florida and other states of any discriminatory taint: as long as adequate notice is given, curricular validity is established (Neill, 1978; Gray, 1980; Citron, 1982), and racial or ethnic bias eliminated from the instruments. Moreover, while Lemly (1982) claims testing programs have been allowed to exist on the "margin of legality," the courts held that racially discriminatory effects of testing attributable to the "vestiges of segregation" would not be permitted.

The court decisions further uphold the view that testing program results may be used for remediation only, even if such remediation occurs in classrooms predominantly populated by black students. Indeed, the courts maintained that the provision of remediation through part of a school day in predominantly minority or black student classes did not constitute racially divisive schooling. The courts did, however, recognize the dangers inherent in assigning students to racially homogeneous remedial courses for the entire school day. These rulings have been of little comfort to minority student advocates who have observed how purportedly objective policies in ability grouping and discipline often adversely affect minority students, purging them from desirable classrooms, programs, and schools, and restricting their subsequent educational opportunities and life chances.

The fear of minority student advocates through the early phase of the standards movement has been the likelihood that minority students would be deprived of educational credentials necessary for further schooling and work. This, without any definite proof that possession of the basic skills, as defined and measured through competency tests, actually is critical for academic performance and employment. In addition to this concern, an additional curriculum matter has arisen. It has been argued that the pursuit of minimum competency knowledge and skills (which must be a focus of instruction if the tests are valid) will institutionalize minimal standards to the educational harm of all. While greater instructional attention to basic skills would enable students with performance deficiencies to develop needed proficiencies, such schooling would be deadly for students already competent in the basics. It would impoverish the overall curriculum, even for those students greatly in need of remedial work. In light of these concerns, the "excellence" movement has arisen.

The Excellence Movement

The goals of the excellence movement are diversely cast and variously represented by Adler's Paideia proposal (1982) for a universal liberal curriculum, the report of The College Board on Academic Preparation for College (1982), the Carnegie Foundation report by Boyer, High School (1983), the Twentieth Century Fund Task Force on Elementary Education and Secondary Education Policy, Making the Grade, (1983), Sizer's Horace's Compromise (1984), the Education Commission of the States Action for Excellence (1983), and, pre-eminently, the National Commission for Excellence in Education report, A Nation at Risk (1983).

In its public stance, this movement seeks to rescue the already competent from intellectual oblivion. It aims to assure that the capable achieve the skills necessary to secure highly skilled employment in managerial and technical enterprises. It reflects the interests of a corporate and technological elite. The rhetoric of the movement parallels that of the minimum competency movement, but it aims to affect another scholastic population and other levels of educational achievement. In its universalizing rhetoric it speaks generally and dramatically of risks entailed by students' inadequate preparation for life beyond the secondary school, in their inadaequate literary (as opposed to literacy) skills or lack of sophisticated (calculus-level) quantitative ability. The movement is concerned with the ability of students to rise rapidly to the complex demands of an elite college level curriculum. Like the famed socio-analytic "theories of the middle range," the excellence movement is interested in phenomena in the middle of the spectrum of educational attainment, seeking to move the center to a higher level of attainment, even at the risk of leaving a gap between the well-prepared and the minimally prepared. The movement presupposes the competence of the extremely capable and achieving; in practice it has little to offer those barely functioning at the other extreme.

The demand that its target audience better equip itself with high-order skills and knowledge arises in great part from the explicit aim of the movement to assure the continuing economic and technological dominance of the United States in the world market and in international relations (The National Commission for Educational Excellence, 1983). Its intended beneficiaries are to prepare themselves better to serve as leaders and managers of social institutions. By contrast, the drive for minimal competency seeks to reduce "functional" illiteracy, to make some persons minimally employable, and to distinguish those who possess proficiencies (or the interest and basis for attaining them) from those who do not. Both aspects of the standards movement seek to restore meaning to credentials and to bestow status on those who hold them, stigmatizing those who do not secure them and even reducing their life chances through economic exclusion or marginality if they cannot or do not make the grade.

The common rhetoric on standards and competence obscures the specificity of the two prongs -- toward minima and maxima -- of the movement (Ericson, 1984). It makes them appear to be pursuing the same or approximately the same goals. Yet the distinctive thrusts of the movement lend credence to Broudy's (1980) fear that through the minimum competency movement we "might regress (in the name of innovation to be sure) to a two-tiered system of public schools, with minimal functional literacy for the masses -- as a sort of underclass Volksschule -- and a more standard curriculum for the children of the classes" (1980, p. 116). Indeed, the once draconian policy proposal that schools distribute diplomas to the certified and certificates of attendance to the test failures or that uniform diplomas be issued with test results printed on them (Page, 1980) have been surpassed by the passage in New York, Rhode Island, Washington, D.C., Missouri, Oklahoma, Texas, and Virginia of legislation designating two classes of high school diplomas -- one for those completing college entry requirements and another for those simply finishing a general or other curriculum (Pipho and Flakus-Mosqueda, 1984; Pipho, 1987).

The excellence component of the standards movement thus far has been subjected to few rigorous and systematic analyses. A report by the Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development (Spady and Marx, 1984) attempts at least to summarize and to categorize the various curricular, administrative, instructional, and performance goals of the crucial reports. Its chief audience is composed of state policy-makers, school boards, and educational practitioners -- people who would find its practical distillation of a great deal of data most useful. Somewhat more probing reflections from the Harvard Graduate School of Education symposium, "The Year of Reports," appear in the Harvard Educational Review (1984). The chief concern of participants was the need for fiscal support to implement the generally praiseworthy objectives. A second concern was the overtly instrumental view of schooling reflected in the various proposals -- educational change was tailored to fit the productive and competitive needs of the society, beyond any other of the general ends of schooling. Finally, participants noted that the universal-sounding goals of the proposals were appropriate to a middle-class elite and spoke little about the realistic educational needs and prospects of minority and working-class children.

Pincus (1984) links the surge of the excellence movement to an overall conservative shift in the social and political ethos. This shift repudiates the liberal, redistributive focus found in most previous educational policies, and demands that students and schools subordinate themselves to the values either of the ideological new right or to the systemic goals and modes of action of the corporate center-right. Neither camp of this recently ascendant conservative coalition has been sympathetic to the needs of minority students or citizens. Pincus asks, "Will the imposition of higher standards and more required courses actually boost the level of student achievement? . . . The centrists' move to increase standards will probably have a polarizing effect, motivating some of the better students, while making it more difficult for some of the slowest students" (1984, p. 55).

Pincus, too, stresses the implications of these new developments for racial stratification by way of their impact on civil rights enforcement and the notion of social progress through affirmative action:

> What will happen to minority and disadvantaged students whose expectations were raised by the policies of the 1960s and 1970s? The more liberal policies of the past two decades were in part a response to growing anger and militance in minority communities . . . Now the centrists are telling minorities, as well as women and the disadvantaged, that they have gone too far. Strict color-blind policies are all that can be expected in the near future. It is doubtful that minorities will look to the centrist conservatives for support (1984, p. 56).

Pincus sees the multi-level excellence drive as educationally misguided. In an effort to improve achievement it "puts a set of hurdles in front of students in the form of more required courses, minimum competencies to graduate, and higher grade point averages and SAT scores to enter college" (p. 56). Ericson (1984) argues that both extremes of the standards movement serve to restore the credibility of certification: while the rhetoric is about increasing achievement, the substantive and consequential focus of the programs is to reduce rates of educational attainment. The socially attributed value of a diploma or degree varies with its availability in the population, he claims. The sense that educational credentials are compromised really arises from the fact that so many people hold them. Even if achievement rates rise to the point that 76 percent reach "mastery," the high school diploma will remain a low-value symbolic marker of confidence. So as a good in itself, Ericson (1984) contends that functional literacy still has no social advantage, even for an individual in a credential market.

High and restricted levels of achievement, with correspondingly lower rates of mastery, perform the stratification necessary to secure the desired value of the credentials. The new stratification system implied in the "maximum" competency movement forces a speculative look at the fates of the "non-succeeders" and non-college-goers, if an excellence curriculum were to be uniformly imposed in the schools. Ericson (1984) predicts that higher dropout rates and decreases in the number mastering graduation criteria will follow. The point is unstated but implied. Those abandoned by the system would be those "non-masters" or bare masters of the "minimal" who are overwhelmingly minority students and from lower economic circumstances. Ericson suggests this implication of the standards movement has not yet been grasped by the public. While restoring credence to the educational system is a desired public goal, he asks if the cost of lowered attainment rates and the crucial drop in achievement are acceptable in a society seeking universal education and literacy.

The movement toward maximum standards has proceeded at several levels. First, there has been a move toward tightening graduation requirements in high school, reflected in the addition of mandatory courses, changes in curriculum content, and more rigorous standards of evaluation (Pipho and Flakus-Mosqueda, 1984). Second, there has been an increase in entrance requirements at all levels of post-secondary education -- for entry into junior colleges, to upper division curricula, and to four-year institutions (Chronicle of Higher Education, Dec. 2, Dec. 9, 1979). Finally, there has been an internal tightening of standards in post-secondary schools, including efforts to fight grade inflation, the imposition of new requirements, and demands to demonstrate proficiency in basic skills as a condition for advancement between program levels and even to degrees.

A number of writers have described the scope of remedial efforts required at the post-secondary level, and the numbers of students in selective locales affected by them (Watters, 1979; Kraetsch, 1980; Morante, Fashkow, and Meduto, 1984; Chronicle of Higher Education, 1979). Institutions in California, Texas, Florida, Ohio, and New Jersey are reported to have responded to the increased costs of remediation by demanding evidence of more substantive schooling with higher levels of achievement in high school. (See especially the California Academic Senates, Statement of Competencies in English and Mathematics Expected of Entering Freshmen, 1982). In Florida, New Jersey, and

Georgia, new post-secondary students are required to pass a standardized examination for course placement.

These writings show an expectation on the part of policy-makers that additional coursework in key subject areas in high school will enable students to develop the proficiencies presupposed in college work and obviate the need for remedial instruction in college mathematics, English, and science. In its report, the College Board (1983) specified areas of competence that should be assumed on the part of all post-secondary students, and, furthermore, suggested a high school curriculum that would promote their development. What is notable in this report is the extent to which the suggested secondary curriculum resembles that required of applicants to the most select colleges and universities.

The complaints about the poor backgrounds of new college students have contributed to the increase in high school graduation requirements imposed by many states. Pipho and Flakus-Mosqueda (1984) reported for the Education Commission of the States that "since 1980 more than half the states have raised high school or graduation requirements. For the most part, the number of units of all high school students has been increased. But a number of states have also increased the total number of academic or basic skills required for graduation, while decreasing the number of electives students are permitted to earn" (p. 5). The specifics of these requirements vary by state, but Pipho and Flakus-Mosqueda recently prepared a timely summary of them. These are:

> Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana, South Carolina, Rhode Island (for the college-bound) have raised their mathematics requirements to three or more years. Florida and Kentucky require three years of science. Foreign language is required for the college-bound in Rhode Island (two years) and the District of Columbia. In California and Oregon students must take one unit of fine arts or foreign language, while several other states require districts to offer foreign language as an elective. For English and language arts, 29 states require four years and many others require three (Pipho and Flakus-Mosqueda, 1984, p. 5).

Pipho (1984), Howe (1984), and others have stressed that the excellence movement has had a significant salutary effect: it has focused public attention on schools and has mobilized support for educational spending. What is interesting to observe is that this support, cautious and unreliable as it is, has emerged precisely at the point where the policy emphasis in the standards movement has shifted from competence to excellence, from monitoring inputs for opportunity to adjudicating certification of achievement outputs. The political question underlying all social policy, including support for educational initiatives, must be raised here: who benefits and in what ways from the new enthusiasm, from the new requirements and standards? That question cannot be answered with any methodological rigor yet. Logic suggests that students who barely pass minimum competency tests and those who qualify for officially designated second-string diplomas reap little from the standards drive with its overall promotion of aid for the able, incentives for the motivated, and rewards for the successful. In its recent incarnation, the movement seems not to be raising the floor of achievement, but lifting a few individuals to better heights, and moving the rest to the basement.

In the next section available data will be reported on the educational consequences of the new standards and state and local new standards program implementation policies. It should be kept in mind that while many of the new standards policies have been designed to improve students' poor academic performances, they also touch on issues of public policy, especially concerning their alleged beneficiaries. Evidence on benefit and impact, where available, will be presented before moving on to a discussion in the subsequent section on advocacy perspectives.

Data-Based Findings of the Educational Consequences of the New Standards and State and Local Standards Program Policies

What have been the educational consequences of the new performance standards, especially for black and other minority students? What have been their pedagogical and socio-economic effects? What do the various educational constituencies think about the programs? These and other similar questions can be answered only impressionistically.

For the moment there are no hard data on the impact the new standards have had on such schooling outcomes as retention rates, dropout rates, tracking practices, admissions, or degree attainment. Knowledgeable observers such as Pipho (1984), Madaus (1984), Klein (1984), and Gorce (1983) report no broad-gauged evaluations of the testing programs that in the mid to late 1970's ignited storms of controversy. Madaus (1984) maintains that failure rates appear to be diminishing because schools are teaching to the tests; Pipho suggests that those who fail the tests and fail to receive high school diplomas also are deficient on other high school graduation criteria. Both these experts caution that educated surmises are standing in for badly needed studies. Klein (1984) reports only two doctoral dissertations that systematically attempt to isolate the institutional effects of testing programs in samples of California school districts, and these studies focus more on curricular effects than on demographic or socio-economic outcomes.

The existing data and literature on the effects of new performance standards can be grouped in several categories: material showing the importance of educational access for individual success; descriptions of specific state and local standards programs; community responses to new standards policies; and the specific experience of minority students subject to new policies.

It is difficult to quarrel with the observation that opportunities for advancement in the social hierarchy in American society are closely linked with level of educational attainment. While educational attainment per se is not likely to equalize the distribution of social advantages through the class structure, at the individual level education does improve prospects for moving up the socio-economic ladder (Jencks et al., 1972; Jencks et al., 1979).

In a large and rigorous study, sociologists Alexander and McDill (1976) found strong and pervasive evidence of effects from curriculum membership upon academic achievement and other schooling outcomes. These researchers indicate that enrollment in a college preparatory program "appreciably increases the likelihood of acquiring as friends those students with college plans, high ability and economically advantaged backgrounds . . . . One consequence of participation in such interpersonal matrices is to reinforce or change respondents' values and attitudes to conform to items on the 'formal agenda' of the school such as a commitment to higher education and to the acquisition of an intellectual-achievement orientation" (p. 977). They report further that curriculum tracking also affects subjective outcomes in students, such as intellectualism, self-conceptions of academic competence and educational plans, which in turn enhances academic performance. Alexander and McDill summarize their research with the claim that "curriculum membership has considerable consequence for a broad range of schooling outcomes and, by implication, for school retention as well." They assert further that "curriculum differentiation may be instrumental in maintaining status advantages and disadvantages through the educational system" (p. 977).

In a follow-up study on these topics in 1978, Alexander, Cook, and McDill found that while the major individual determinants of track placement were ability, junior high school performance, and academic aspirations, more than half the total variance in placement must be explained by other factors, including demographic background. The group found that

> Placement in a college track does enhance achievement, goals, and social supports in senior high school and markedly increases the probability of application to and acceptance by a college. Thus, the advantages accruing to such students are cumulative . . . . Conversely, students in nonacademic tracks are, by virtue of such assignment, substantially disadvantaged in their future educational careers (p. 65).

More succinctly and importantly, they learned that "different curricula do independently affect the achievements of their members. They improve those of academic students and depress those of general and vocational track members" (p. 65). There is increasing evidence that one's familial social status is a strong determinant of one's curriculum membership, and race is closely correlated with status. There is thus some indication that curriculum placement is structurally related to race. This relationship is impressionistically evident to classroom observers and others familiar with educational policy. Testing programs that explicitly seek to sort people by merit thus could be expected to sort students on racial lines as well. Since this selection system serves as a basis for allocating school resources to students, it fosters a new and seemingly legitimate (presumably objective) argument for the differential distribution of those school resources important for mobility. Racial identity and class location seem decisively, if indirectly, to influence access to socio-educational goods.

The importance of research in this area rests on the centrality of race and class (along with past academic performance) for curricular access and the benefits in later life that schooling affords. Rosenbaum's work (1980) on the social and educational implications of differential educational grouping has attempted to identify other subjective effects that can be related to occupational and status attainment. His writings challenge claims that educational or ability groupings are meritocratically determined: research shows they are not as homogeneous as claimed, he writes; nor is there any evidence of pedagogical necessity or advantage to such groups. Whatever the benefits that they do bestow, they are not essential to student learning. Since such groups cannot be shown to have any essential educational merit, he reasons, the domain of their major effects instead is social -- it is as social systems that ability and curricular groupings can be shown to have important educational effects. They are seen to create hierarchy among students, classifying them in specific categories that receive different benefits, including esteem. He observes that the group classifications "define simultaneously the academic and social esteem students receive in school; the way students evaluate their social status and academic competence; and their social interaction in and out of school" (Rosenbaum, 1980, p. 395). Linking this set of findings with those of Alexander, Cook, and McDill (1978) leads to a recognition of the extent to which new standards replicate existing (and arbitrary) systems of educational stratification which, in turn, replicate stratification in the larger society.

One concern with the emergence of new standards programs is precisely the impact they will have on minority students' access to educational programs, credentials, and professional certification. Are they restrictive and potentially exclusionary or do they identify weaknesses for remedial purposes? Doubts about their affirmative value have been raised be scholars (as shall be seen) as policy proponents ignore the potentially disastrous impact of high minority failure rates on school retention, graduation, and post-secondary matriculation rates.

Research by Smith, Strick, and Johnston (1982) on North Carolina achievement and test performance data suggests that a number of student background variables predict eventual performance on reading and mathematics proficiency tests. Their study showed that background variables -- gender, race, parents' educational level, and eighth-grade test scores -- worked as "risk indicators" and in varying combinations predicted eventual performance on reading proficiency tests in 84 percent of cases studied and on mathematics tests in 81 percent. They further maintained that such data are available to schools by the time students are in eighth grade -- allowing a great deal of time for remediation well before the graduation threshold and making the ordeal of a final "graduation" test redundant.

In another interesting research project, Braddock and Dawkins (1981) identified variables associated with black students' success, not in secondary schools but in a variety of post-secondary institutions. Their independent variables included gender, degree of secondary school integration, high school grades, and test scores. Their findings show variety in the strength of the relationships of these variables with specified measures of achievement. The colleges were categorized by two dimensions -- their traditional racial identity and whether they were two- or four-year schools. In general, the research found that high school grades were good predictors of achievement in all but one of the institutional types -- two-year traditionally black institutions. In this one institution, test scores were the better predictors.

These findings suggest that a key predictor of success in all institutions is earlier success. What is not drawn out are the reasons that in-school performance grades are more powerful predictors over test scores in three of the institutional types while test scores predict better in the other. These findings might be interpreted to support the idea that the institutional demands of four-year, traditionally white institutions require a specific kind of learning and performance that is an institutionally related behavior best measured in grades. In two-year traditionally black institutions, curricular performance and success are less dependent on acquiring elements of a class and school culture remote to students and are thus more readily measurable by tests. The remaining findings show that study habits, high school desegregation, and social class background are significant, if non-intellective, determinants of achievement in general (though their respective strengths vary unsystematically among the institutional types).

Put starkly, it appears that having had opportunities to develop intellectual and "non-intellective" skills in negotiating institutional demands seems to affect minority students' post-secondary educational success more than any narrowly constructed measure of ability. It is important that opportunities to develop such necessary skills not be foreclosed for students, as is accomplished by a narrowed and highly stratified high school curriculum.

The percentage of black high school graduates, based on the total population of black 18- to 24-year olds, increased from 59.5 percent in 1970 to 69.7 percent in 1980, yet college enrollment rates, which increased between 1970 and 1975, declined slightly by 1980. Black student college enrollment as a percentage of the population of black 18- to 24-year olds was 15.5 percent in 1970, 20.7 percent in 1975, and 19.4 percent in 1980. The percentage of black students 25 years old and older graduating from college in 1980 (7.9 percent) was slightly less than half that of white students in the same age category (17.8 percent). While some strides have been made in relation to college-going rates, proportionally more blacks than whites enroll in junior colleges, and few of them transfer to upper division work elsewhere. Black students and women are also underrepresented in such fields of study as engineering, biological sciences, and physical sciences (College Entrance Examination Board, 1985). Ironically, at the time that standards are being tightened, with terminal sanctions in place, Trent (1984) observes that higher rates of high school completion and higher levels of in-school achievement will be necessary to narrow the racial gap in post-secondary degree attainment and professional field selection.

A great deal of the momentum for the standards movement derives from the widespread belief that rates of functional illiteracy have become exceptionally high, and that at all levels of the educational system, standards, achievement, and evaluation techniques have collapsed. Proponents of the standards movement claim that research confirms their perceptions that higher standards and negative achievement incentives would improve school performance. Yet there seems to be little hard data to specify the nature and dimensions of the "literacy" problems, just as there is little evidence to support the claims that higher standards would solve the problem.

It has been pointed out that the standards movement has been launched and sustained from outside the educational community (Airasian and Madaus, 1983; Haney and Madaus, 1978); the objectives have been established by non-professionals, and the vehicles for achieving them have been selected on the basis of common sense, intuitive logic, and undocumented educational theories. They have been based on particular interpretations of scattered data, claiming to document declines in achievement and competence (Gallagher, 1980; The National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). Indeed, the chief claims about the literacy problem rates hold that some 23 million Americans are "functionally illiterate by the simplest tests of reading and writing," and it is suspected that some 13 percent of all 17-year-olds, and possible 40 percent of minority 17-year-olds, are similarly functionally illiterate (The National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). The frequently cited basis for concern over declining student achievement has been, until recently, the lowering trendline in mean SAT scores (though these supposedly measure aptitude) and a number of dropping means on other local and statewide measures of achievement. It is not at all clear that these phenomena require the remedies that have been devised. While not ignoring what they do signify, it is important to contextualize them.

First, with regard to the SAT, it has been pointed out that it is a test taken mainly by prospective college goers, and because of its purposes and content, is not a universal indicator of educational achievement (Cawelti, 1978). Second, there is strong evidence that the desirability of attending college has led many students to take the tests who in the past would not have done so. Their increased numbers over the past two decades and their lower levels of test performance have brought down aggregate means. The contemporary test-taking population, it is argued, is simply not comparable with that of the past, and neither of these select populations is comparable to the general high school population of the past or present (Munday, 1979; Haney and Madaus, 1978). In a similar way, increased rates of secondary school attendance, including many students who in the past would have left school for the world of work, has changed the overall secondary school population with the result that their performances on standardized measures of achievement have been included in the assessments, bringing down these aggregate scores. Yet the drop in achievement levels has also been challenged by serious scholars including Jencks (Haney and Madaus, 1978) and Munday (1979), both of whom maintain that hard data show that achievement levels have remained stable with only negligible fluctuations over the last decade.

With regard to claims of crisis in literacy rates, a second body of writings is interesting to consider. These writings challenge the accuracy of assertions about the increasing levels of functional illiteracy. First, it has been pointed out, these assertions assume that universal literacy is the standard of evaluating the level of educational attainment in society. Universal literacy may indeed be a desirable goal, but there is no reason to assume that policies in the United States calling for universal school attendance would be complied with or would necessarily guarantee the achievement of universal literacy. Second, there has been no consensus on the definition of "illiteracy" itself. The content of the concept is not self-evident; it is heavily determined by social norms and expectations. In general, the concept is used to mean failure to perform a range of cultural tasks, including reading and writing, at a specific level of competence.

For some observers, it appears that what is at issue is not basic illiteracy, but the absence of higher-order cognitive and academic skills, including knowledge of certain conventions of language use and ability in formal modes of analysis. To distinguish this elevated notion of literacy from the more basic and traditional concept, i.e., competence in elementary reading and writing, the qualifier "functional" has been applied. This taxonomic maneuver has been cited by Levine (1984) as a clever means for disguising the essential amorphousness of the host of policies in pursuit of diverse objectives in different communities and political contexts. All such policies have been united by the supposedly objective and scientific quest for "functional literacy." Levine questions whether "literacy" is the point of these policies. In reality, many persons assumed to be functionally illiterate may indeed possess competence in basic functional skills; however, they may also be deficient with respect to possession of the desired higher-level areas of competence presumed of someone with a certain level of educational attainment. In view of the elasticity of the concept, the problem of functional literacy is not simply an issue of alarming numbers but also one of politics and definitions. As Levine suggests, the goals of literacy education and policy are most often pursued on the social plane.

While the policies supposedly dictated by the "facts" about academic competence may be challenged and while the documented phenomena that constitute the problems may be variously interpreted, there is little doubt that equality in educational outcomes still has not been approached. There is also compelling evidence that equality of opportunity never has been realized and is rapidly receding as a policy goal.

Findings of student performance that have been reported in the professional and lay press underscore serious deficiencies in academic achievement of the sort measured by standardized tests. These achievement levels also differ by race. One valuable function of the test scores is to show the extent to which the lessons of schooling are not reaching minority students. This view has been expressed by Hohner (1982), who argues that when tests have validity, they usefully show the location of the gaps in achievement between black and white students. Yet even if Hohner claims that the standings of black students relative to white has improved on tests, data also show that many black students are at risk of losing access to further schooling and credentials because of harsh new promotion and graduation policies.

In Florida, evidence of a racial achievement gap is striking. Data about failure in Florida are frequently cited in academic articles, news stories and court documents (Fisher, 1978, 1980; Pullin, 1981; Debra P. v. Turlington, 1979). As noted earlier, in the first test administration in Florida, 78 percent of all black and 25 percent of all white students failed one or both sections of the two-part mathematics and communications competency test. Data on repeat test takers show that 74 percent of these black examinees failed, compared with 25 percent of the whites. At the third sitting, 60 percent of the black repeaters failed the mathematics section, compared with 36 percent of the whites. Testimony introduced to the courts during the Florida litigation showed that by the time of the third administration of the test, only 91,000 students out of the original testing cohort of 115,901 students were still in school. By the end of the senior year only 5.8 percent, or 5,300 students (exclusive of the dropouts), had failed to pass the required proficiency test. It has been argued that students who otherwise might have fulfilled diploma requirements and graduated, left school early rather than fail repeated sittings of the proficiency exam. No hard evidence to support the claim has been offered, however (Debra P. v. Turlington, 1979, 1981).

As staggering as these statewide figures are -- especially about early test performance -- they reflect local performance patterns in Florida. For example, in Jacksonville at two predominantly black high schools, the failure rates were 94 percent and 82 percent (Alschuler and Flinchum, 1979). Exploring achievement in the feeder junior high schools for these schools, it was learned that 40 percent of the seventh graders read below third-grade level and that 96 percent were below expected performance levels in mathematics. As a consequence, the school district launched an intensive remedial program to improve performance earlier than the eleventh grade. Even after the "successful" remedial intervention, students in these schools in grades eight and nine continued to perform substantially below grade level: 30 percent below norm in reading and 28 percent below norm in math.

In Pinellas County in Florida a new promotion policy emerged in the wake of the disastrous test results there. Failure to make a grade-specific cut-off score in achievement tests at all grade levels would result in automatic grade retention: promotion was absolutely predicated on performance. As a result, two to three times the previous numbers of students were retained in their grades. Evaluations of the new policy showed that over several years, throughout the district and at all grade levels, a range of 6 to 16 percent of the initially failing students eventually reached the desired performance level (Elligett and Tocco, 1983). Reports do not identify race as an overt issue in this policy, nor is opposition reported. Parents and students were said to support the program as a spur to learning and not to scorn it as punitive.

In Tampa 19 percent, or 4,200, of high school students were found to have failed the first proficiency test; 64 percent of the failures were black. In this community, use of the tests to deny diplomas was challenged in court (Time, 1979). Although the court ordered diplomas to be awarded to students who met all other requirements for graduation except passing the test, the local policy, consistent with state law, was vigorously supported by State Commissioner of Education Ralph Turlington, who disagreed with the court's demand that students not be penalized for the earlier effects of segregated schooling. "You can't wait until all the vestiges of discrimination are eliminated," he said. "The millenium would be upon us" (Newsweek, 1979b).

Turlington and other performance standards advocates in Florida have gone to great lengths to justify their testing programs. In an exuberant defense Turlington (1979) claimed that after two rounds of test administration, student performance had improved. He cited increases in the passing rates by successive cohorts of black and white eleventh graders on the two parts of the test. Yet, despite obvious improvements in the performance, serious disparities between these two major groups of students continue to exist.

In the second administration of the test, Turlington reports that the white passing rates were 97 percent for the verbal section and 83 percent on math; in the eleventh grade, 39 percent of blacks and 83 percent of white students met diploma requirements (up from 22 percent and 45 percent the year before). Turlington notes that twelfth graders retaking the test showed improvement as well. Sixty-nine percent passed the math test -- 54 percent of black students and 80 percent of whites -- and 88 percent passed communications (78 percent of blacks and 95 percent of whites). Most optimistically, Turlington focuses on gains that predominate among whites and minimizes the continuing low performance rates of blacks. He contentedly points out that despite the rigors of the testing program and the early rates of failure, 80 to 90 percent of the original test takers will eventually qualify for diplomas. Their success results, Turlington claims, from Florida's commitment to remediation, the increased academic diligence of students and teachers, and improvements in school climates.

Turlington's colleague, Thomas Fisher, director of the assessment section in the Florida State Department of Education, likewise ascribes important educational benefits to the Florida testing program (Fisher, 1978). He notes that as they set passing standards requiring 70 percent correct responses, officials anticipated that between 25 and 33 percent of the students would fail it. In fact, up to 36 percent of the students did fail the unscaled, criterion-referenced test (in mathematics), leading Fisher to characterize the original projections as "conservative." He notes that Duvall County, the first school district to receive its test results in late Fall, 1977, had a 45 percent failure rate in mathematics and a 14 percent failure rate in communications. With a statewide appropriation for remediation of $10 million in the first post-testing year and $26 million in the second, Fisher claimed that the state expected to reduce its failure rate to below 5 percent. He did not specify how this reduction would be accomplished.

In a somewhat more analytic mode, Fisher (1980) has elsewhere described the methodological and psychometric logic leading up to the existing Florida program. In a comment important theoretically, but easy to disregard in practice, he claimed that the Florida test never attempted to measure any underlying characteristic of students such as "functional literacy," a concept that he concedes remains ill-defined and probably not specifiable. The goal instead was to determine competency at applying basic skills at the levels of mastery and non-mastery (Fisher, 1980). The logic for selecting the actual skills that were ultimately measured on the test is not revealed. The skills selected were presumed essential to demonstrate. Yet, Fisher reported that analysis of student performance on the specific items measuring designated skills in mathematics and communication varied consistently between black and white students (p. 227). Despite this acknowledgement of racial differences in particular skills, Fisher and other Florida standards proponents denied that such findings implied any bias in test content, item selection, or use of test results. The embedded questions about bias in content of tests and the "universality of skills" seem important enough to be studied in depth.

The Florida program sparked controversy on other grounds as well. Gene Glass (1979) developed a scathing critique of the pedagogical assumptions of the program (chiefly that fear of failure would trigger academic success) and attacked the travesty of social scientific and psychometric canons in setting standards and developing test items. He maintained that unscientific practices and political purposes were concealed by the veil of scientific precision and neutrality below which the Florida standards proponents worked. Other critics, including those within the educational and psychological measurement community, took issue with the specifics of the Florida program and with competency testing in general. McClung (1980), Haney and Madaus (1978), and Pullin (1981) have developed arguments designed not to justify or deny the findings of poor minority achievement in Florida (which they deplore), but to prevent the state from using the limited data of a test administration as the pivotal evaluation criterion that would limit students' educational access and possibly their life chances.

In other states the move to new standards at the secondary and elementary levels resembled that of Florida. The effects of the initiatives were also similar. The lessons that North Carolina drew from the Florida experience have been cited in several interesting reports (Gallagher, 1981; Jaeger, 1983; Serow and Davies, 1982; Serow, Davies, and Parramore, 1982). In North Carolina, sanctions such as withholding diplomas from students who failed the test, were not immediately imposed. Instead, students were given a three-year notice before sanctions began with the class of 1981. Students were also given ten chances to pass the test, and it was assumed that districts would provide appropriate remediation (Gallagher, 1981).

North Carolina also sought ways to establish a credible and non-arbitrary cut-off score for failure by experimenting with a process of integrating the diverse notions and standards of parents and community members, teachers, and school administrators and counselors in three distinct categories. These participants were to identify the skills and number of test items on which students would have to succeed to be judged as competent (Jaeger, 1983). Although the differences by group were interesting, participation in this process was low and its recommendations were not binding.

The North Carolina experience has been the focus of two interesting evaluative studies, though both are of limited scope. Serow, Davies, and Parramore (1982) attempted to determine if performance gains in a series of repeat test sittings were related to individual characteristics or to the type and duration of intervening remedial work. They found that school characteristics and the nature of remedial work accounted for most of the performance gains and that improvement in mathematics was considerably more sensitive to in-school characteristics than was improvement in reading (which the authors suggest reflects the greater dependency of reading proficiency on unspecified broader cultural factors as compared to mathematics, which is heavily school-related). The closer the links between test content and curricular content, the more sensitive to remediation do performance gains appear to be. Schools where remediation was most successful were found to employ daily individualized remedial instruction and to teach to the proficiency test.

In the second North Carolina study, Serow and Davies (1982) explored the effect of proficiency testing on equality of educational opportunity. Their findings caused them considerable concern about the racial distribution of program effects. Using January 1980 testing program outcomes, they found that all but a few whites (1.3 percent) had passed the test by the third administration, while 11.3 percent of the black students had not passed by that point. In the sample, black students numbered 35.7 percent but accounted for 82.3 percent of the first-time test failures, a figure consistent with North Carolina statewide testing results where blacks were 25 percent of the test-takers and, eventually, 75 percent of those denied the diplomas. The sample data show, too, that 14 percent of the blacks who failed withdrew from school, compared with 2 percent of whites. As in Florida, students may withdraw from school for many reasons, but the authors suggest the strong possibility that test failures work in subtle ways to push low-achieving students out of school.

Writings on other secondary and post-secondary testing programs that embody the goals of the standards movement mention a number of programs outside the South. These writings rhetorically justify new standards policies but also describe several existing programs.

Proponents James Popham and Stuart Rankin (1981) wrote eagerly of anticipated performance gains among Detroit students as a result of a locally imposed testing program officially adopted to demonstrate the need for widespread instructional improvement. In Detroit the superintendent mobilized key community support for the program in 1977 and hired outside consultants to devise tests for measuring those skills deemed critical by the community. The program was to allow students three chances to pass the test. If they failed each time, then they would lose their chances to receive diplomas.

In the first test administration, 81 percent of the students passed the reading test, 55 percent passed writing, and 49 percent passed mathematics. Students fared better in those test tasks that required them to demonstrate the mechanics of academic skills; they did worse in those tasks calling for synthetic, integrative, and expressive abilities. In the new "measurement-driven instruction" that was developed following the testing, curricular goals were reshaped to promote the skills that had been measured in the tests. A modest remedial program was also implemented to enable students to grasp the specified proficiencies.

Voluntary local programs in Denver (Beal, 1978; Gilman, 1978), in Gary, Indiana (Henderson, 1978; Gilman, 1978), in Modesto, California (Enochs, 1978), in Iowa City (Workman, 1981), and in Omaha (Findley, 1978; Gilman, 1978) have been reported as having positive effects on measured achievement. Gilman argues that in these latter cities, students came to take responsibility for their own education with the result that in Denver failures dropped eventually from 15 percent in 1959 to 1.5 percent in 1976; and in Gary, only six of 2,500 seniors were reported to have failed to receive their diplomas. No comparative data were furnished to indicate that students who "passed" had indeed achieved higher levels of performance than those in communities where testing programs with advancement sanctions had not been instituted.

Writings on standards and testing policies in California and Oregon stress that these states require communities to develop standards and measures, but they leave the test design and standard selection to local education authorities (Hart, 1978; California State Department of Education, 1980; Herron, 1980). The variety in local programs in some respects conceals a drive toward curricular and administrative uniformity. Data on test performances of California tenth graders in 1978-79 showed that in 50 percent of the state's school districts, 70 percent or more of the students passed proficiency requirements, and in the other 50 percent, fewer than 70 percent passed. Of this latter group, a third of the districts reported that failure rates were as high as 40 percent.

California data (California State Department of Education, 1980), drawn from selected and anonymous districts varying by enrollment size, indicate that the performance of ethnic minorities falls below that of white students in all categories of school districts. This report made the interesting observation that data were not readily available from individual districts, making a comprehensive statewide study of the impact of testing virtually impossible.

In one last program outside the South, New York State competency testing policy has been built on the existing program of statewide testing. The "competency-testing" movement there was reported to have achieved its major impact with the development of an explicitly designated "competency" test and the raising of minimum passing levels from the seventh grade to the ninth-grade level. This move, firmly backed by the State Commissioner of Education, was expected to affect high school attrition and diploma denial rates severely (Phi Delta Kappan, "Newsfront," 1979).

While testing programs have been the vehicle of choice for implementing new standards, their link to policies governing grade promotion cannot be overlooked. The logic permeating these policies is the same as that for proficiency tests: advancement through the educational hierarchy depends on meeting specific grade-level performance criteria. The new promotion policies may be based on test performance or they may be based on performance according to traditional classroom criteria. The pedagogical effects of these new promotion policies have been even less well analyzed than those for proficiency testing programs.

One program that has been studied is New York City's "Gates of Promotion" which was initiated as a result of the "effective schools" research (Edmonds, 1979). Labaree's

(1984) discussion of the logic and operation of this program, particularly the way it automatically directs two-time grade failures to vocational courses, shows the underlying stratifying function in some of the new standards initiatives. The program also exempts the schools from responsibility for student performance, applying all sanctions for substandard achievements to students themselves with no regard for social, structural, institutional, and cultural impediments to school learning. Labaree notes that the program attempts to conceal the meaning of grade retention by redefining it in program rhetoric as "an opportunity" and not as an embarrassing and punitive outcome. Nevertheless, the program architects have had to be aware that among students, grade retention is not perceived as an opportunity to be pursued since the key incentive in the entire program is avoidance of grade failure. In 1984 program proponents were already speaking of success, Labaree reports, despite the insufficiency of the evidence accumulated to determine whether the new rigor would raise achievement more than it would burden and discourage students.

Promotion policies were also discussed in relation to events in Greensville, Virginia. Cates and Ash (1983) describe the opposition that the meritocratic school policy there aroused among black parents who perceived that stratifying students by within-grade ability grouping and by promotional category ("promoted," "half-promoted," "retained") had an adverse effect on black students. Because of these policies, the parents reopened a suit first filed in 1965 charging the Greensville County school system with discrimination. A court trial was avoided when the parents and school board negotiated an agreement which was formalized as a federal court approved consent decree. The agreement required the school board to phase out its achievement results practices and develop new policies "designed to insure better racial balance in promotions, class and ability groupings, and other aspects of the educational program" (p. 138).

The consent decree was denounced by some standards advocates as a thwarting of one district's commitment to ending social promotion and to avoiding the high costs of remediation normally associated with minimum competency programs. The value of the program in their eyes was that it efficiently redistributed existing resources within the traditional school structure to assist conveniently aggregated failed students who happened to be preponderantly black. Moreover, according to data analyzed by Cates and Ash (1983) -- data unavailable during the negotiations leading to the consent decree -- the Greensville school policies did enjoy some success, although less for black students than for white students.

Post-Secondary Standards

The new standards movement in post-secondary education has been much less cohesive and univocal than the version in secondary and elementary schools. A common theme in the various writings is students' lack of cognitive preparation for college-level work and the consequent quantities of time and money that must be devoted to bringing students' proficiencies in reading and writing to "college level." A variety of data have dramatized the complaints of colleges (The Chronicle of Higher Education, Dec. 2, 1979 and Dec. 9, 1979; The College Board, 1983) and the responses of the institutions.

Results of a 1980 survey of 103 post-secondary education agencies by Kraetsch showed New Jersey and Georgia leading the states in post-secondary competency testing, with Florida in the planning stages for a program at that time. Oregon was reported to be devising a mechanism for state and local community college officials to plan a program; Indiana, Georgia, Oregon, and Alabama were developing performance objectives. New Jersey and California state college systems had contracted with testing companies to devise instruments for assessing entering students' deficiencies for the purposes of placement and remediation.

The effects and operations of these programs have been studied for the most part only locally. For example, in New Jersey the Basic Skills Assessment Program requires all students in the state post-secondary system to demonstrate competence in a number of curricular areas. Data reported on the New Jersey test reveal that vast numbers of post-secondary admittees performed below standard, even after the advent of a proficiency testing program in the New Jersey public schools. Moreover, the Basic Skills Assessment passing rate has not improved much over the years the program has been in place: in 1973 the pass rate was 27 percent, rising only to 29 percent in a recent administration. Nevertheless, the test is reported to be useful in placing students in appropriate courses and as a means for evaluating the effectiveness of curricular links between high schools and the state post-secondary system (Morante, Faskow, and Meduto, 1984). These researchers also claim that the test results show that successful completion of high school, even in college preparatory tracks, does not guarantee particular levels of achievement or competence.

The Georgia program has been described by Ridenour (1980), Renze (1980), and Pounds (1980). It requires students to pass a language skills examination to advance to upper division work; it also requires a placement test upon college entry. At the outset failures ranged from 30 to 35 percent. The rate has since fallen. The test has been linked with revisions of the English curriculum throughout the state college system and with a systemwide commitment to instruction in writing in all courses, not just in English or composition classes. These curricular changes have been viewed as positive, necessary outcomes of the program. Some have argued, however, that the program has adverse effects on student selection and retention figures. In 1978, 23.3 percent of the 42,000 freshman test takers were required to take non-credit remedial work in basic skills areas, a burden reportedly perceived by many students as punitive because of additional costs in time, semester hours, and educational fees. Students also have only one year to complete remedial work. They are barred from admission to credit-bearing non-remedial work if they have not passed the tests by the end of that year.

Watters (1979) reports that traditionally black colleges have a higher failure rate on Georgia's basic skills examination (for college entry-level placement) and its Regents' test (required for college graduation) than traditionally white institutions. This disparity has prompted Georgia educator Louie Crew, a professor at Fort Valley College, according to Watters (1978), to point to patterns of discrimination in the use of the test (granting access to courses, programs, and credentials) and to suggest bias in test content. He pointed to the fact that, overall, 30 percent of the test takers were reported to have failed the exam in one administration; in a retake, 50 percent failed it again. Crew finds it critical that many of these test failures are black students who are not receiving the help needed despite the diagnostic potential of the tests. Watters, however, cites the reports of Georgia state system officials that parents and students who fail the test concede to its validity.

Policies in Florida's post-secondary system have been adopted to ensure that students indeed have the skills to handle college work. Moreover, a task force for legislating post-secondary basic skills was formed (Kraetsch, 1980; Robinson, et al., 1981). These, too, have been devised in light of a perceived fall in standards. Somewhat differently from Georgia, Florida has used test results to direct students to "appropriate curricula," offering remediation if needed.

In light of court requirements to increase minority representation in its post-secondary system (Adams v. Richardson, 1973; Adams v. Califano, 1977; Adams v. Bell, 1983), Florida has used test results and other indicators of achievement to create special admissions categories whose members' progress could be monitored during their careers. Bridges and Farrell (1982) reported on the overall scholastic performance of minority students in Florida who were admitted to post-secondary programs in these three admissions categories: unrestricted, restricted, and special. Their research explored the rates of institutional survival, progress to degree, and academic success of white and black students by admissions category. They found that in each admissions category black students proportionately outlasted white students in institutional retention rates. White students' success in their programs was greater than that of blacks, however. The study also showed that using standard statewide assessment scores as an admissions criterion (e.g., assuming its predictive power for eventual college-level gpa) proved more valid for black students than for whites for whom high school test scores were weakly correlated with post-secondary performance. Finally, the study noted that 83 percent and 80 percent of the black students in the two respective non-traditional admissions categories (restricted and special) completed the first year of college. While their grades were lower than those of black and white students in the traditional admissions category, 79 percent and 55 percent of the black students in two non-traditional admissions categories were in good academic standing after the first year of college. Bridges and Farrell (1982) claim to demonstrate that performance standards can be upheld and reached by students in non-traditional entrance categories with the provision of proper support and encouragement. Indirectly they suggest that some standardized measure of academic potential and achievement can be used to enhance student progress as long as punitive sanctions are not built into this process.

In Louisiana the decline of potential black teachers has been associated with test requirements. With the imposition of the new professional standards in 1978, the passing rate on the National Teacher Examination was 53 percent. By August 1983 the passing rate had risen to 76 percent but the number of black students taking the test fell dramatically: from 31 percent of the testing cohort in 1978 to 13 percent in 1983 (Kauchak, 1984). The reasons for such poor test performance among persons who have been successfully working their way through a professional educational program have been hotly debated in Louisiana. One popular explanation has focused on the discontinuity between the curriculum of traditional teacher education programs and the content of the National Teacher Examination. Another has stressed that the performance required by the test depends on a solid secondary school foundation not provided to many examination candidates from previously segregated and inferior secondary schools. Whatever the reason, the validity of the test as a measure of professional competence has not been established. Its use disqualifies large numbers of otherwise competent black educators from holding jobs and has thus been viewed as patently discriminatory. Further, its use indirectly undermines the aspirations of young black school children who shape their career and educational aspirations with reference to available role models.

Perspectives of Constituent Groups

Writings have also focused on the involvement and perspectives of various educational constituencies, including lay people, in the various activities related to the establishment of new standards policies. Jaeger's work (1982) discusses the participation of parents and community members, along with teachers, principals, and counselors, in the determination of the essential skills to qualify as "competent" in North Carolina. Here, parents and community people were much more demanding in terms of item content and passing score cut-off levels than were educational administrators. In turn, counselors and principals set more exacting standards than did teachers.

Killian (1983) reports a community poll from Lewisville, Texas in which students, school staff, former students, and members of the public were asked to identify the skills that schools should promote and those which the local schools failed to emphasize sufficiently. The most critical group consisted of the former students. Overall, the poll found that respondents believed the school should be developing proficiency in "life skills" and "coping," more than in "communications," "computation," or "scientific knowledge." The poll partly revealed that among large sectors of the public, the goals for education are at odds not only with the traditional content of school knowledge but also with the tests designed to measure the attainment of desired skills.

Renze (1981) surveyed a sample of Midwestern high school principals for their attitudes toward testing programs in the schools. He found strong opposition to proficiency tests to be slight (17 percent) and support for them (73 percent) to be good. Most principals (72 percent) reported that teachers accepted proficiency tests with reservations, 4 percent said teachers opposed them, and 16 percent said teachers enthusiastically supported them. This survey also revealed that 43 percent of the principals believed parents to be neutral about the testing program. Most principals (70 percent) said that students were working harder as a result of the tests; 27 percent said testing helped identify student weaknesses; another 27 percent said it also focused attention on basic skills; and 16 percent said that testing could be used to justify spending on special programs. A large number, 41 percent, said that the tests covered curricular material already in place. About 17.5 percent said that passing requirements were equivalent to ninth-grade-level work; 28.5 percent said that there was no stipulated minimum passing score defined in grade-level terms; and 4 percent reported that passing work had to be at twelfth grade level. Penalties for test failure or sub-par performance were reported by 91 percent of the principals. Diploma sanctions were reported by 40 percent, awarding failures with "certificates of attendance" by 30 percent, and providing "restricted diplomas" by 11 percent. Renze said principals point out that most students pass the test at some point in their careers and graduate.

Albrecht and Duea (1983) also attempted to identify the effect of the call for new "excellence" standards on high school programs in a single state, Iowa, by surveying high school principals. Fifty-five percent of the respondents indicated that their schools had increased graduation requirements and 14 percent had changed the curriculum; 47 percent reported that the changes in policy constituted an improvement in the program and led to improvements in the performance of some students. A number of principals, according to Albrecht and Duea (1983), also noted that the new policies tended to:

- reduce the number of electives offered;
- erode the offerings for the less able students;
- decrease the availability of math and science teachers for the extra needs of students;
- increase the number of dropouts;
- narrow the role of education in the lives of students;
- increase the number of teachers in preparation;

. increase pupil personnel costs;

. diminish curricular attention to fine arts and the practical arts.

The effort to achieve excellence comes at a price which in Iowa has been paid by those average students on whose behalf reforms were nominally devised. The costs are rather unmeasured at this point but it seems that they are both educational and financial, especially in those aspects of the school program directed at the less able, non-college-bound student. In fact, it seems that the needs of this sizable population are all but ignored. The college-bound, already well served, receive even more benefits from the schools, although all students, including these, must suffer some loss from the reduction of offerings in the practical and the fine arts. It seems that the support of standards could have the result of impoverishing the curriculum in a new way, even for white, middle-class, but academically average students.

As a final observation, it bears noting that at least one researcher has examined the attitudes of students to testing programs. Blau (1980) admitted that his study was unsystematic; yet, it drew on 30 in-depth interviews with high school students subject to a testing requirement and its sanctions. Blau found that students were opposed to the testing program. Almost all, he found, believed that tests were another burden imposed on them by adults. Successful, achieving students considered the tests nuisances and feared that their schooling would deteriorate with a focus on the basics. Students in difficulty were described as fearing the tests as possibly insurmountable barriers to jobs and the credentials needed for employment. Neither broad group of students could envision any value to the program. They were also described as resenting the way the program both identified them as "victims" and, at the same time, blamed them. The responses of students to these programs are overwhelmingly understudied and in need of attention.

In the next section, writings advocating or opposing proficiency tests and other new standards policies will be reviewed. It is in these writings that the implications of the tests or policies are most fully contested, and although these reflective, polemical, or theoretical works do not always draw on hard data, their various arguments have defined the terms of the policy debate much more than have the hard and objective data.

Advocacy Writings

A major part of the writing on new standards policies takes the form of polemics for or against their imposition. The writings range from scholarly reflections on the desirability and implications of the reforms to unabashed political drum-beating for them. Writings supporting the imposition of standards have tended to take their positions on several grounds. First, the writers believe that the initiatives in question meet the public demands for accountability: they offer proof of schools teaching and students learning. Second, they advocate new standards to reinvest credentials with meaning. Third, they argue that higher standards will produce higher achievement by providing students with concrete goals and unambiguous evaluation critera. Finally, they provide advice about establishing testing programs and meeting legal and educational objections to them.

Popham, a major proponent of testing policies, incorporates all four of these thematic perspectives in his writing. Two good examples include his description of the Detroit program (Popham and Rankin, 1981) and his testimony at the 1980 adversary hearing on proficiency testing, sponsored by the National Institute of Education (Popham, 1981). At the NIE hearing, he argued that tests are not unfair to minority students and, in fact, reveal the poor quality of the schooling they often receive. A similar view has been articulated by Kenneth Clark, a long-time advocate of black students' interests who supported increasing promotional standards in New York for this reason (Newsweek, 1980). Ross (1982) claims that tests will enable minority students to be better integrated into the educational and occupational mainstream because their learning needs will be better diagnosed. Indeed, Popham declares that students suffer more from receiving counterfeit credentials than if they were to receive no credentials at all.

The California legislator responsible for the testing and standards policy in that state, Gary K. Hart (1978), justified testing with the need to measure the performance of the schools -- to assure the public and students alike that proper educational services were being provided. Fisher (1980) and Turlington (1979) both see the tests as legitimate means for technically measuring school output and as politically legitimate responses to the demand of the public that school systems have "integrity," which they interpret as the awarding of credentials only to those who have earned them. A good historical discussion of the demand for accountability in education appears in Britell (1980), who vigorously defends proficiency testing as ensuring respect for uniform and democratic standards of achievement and as a means for providing essential feedback to students, professionals, legislators, and taxpayers. For her and other proponents, testing also serves as a vehicle for improving schools -- a tool for reform insofar as it can pinpoint areas of weakness in student performance and curriculum.

Standards advocates address the "meaningful credentials" argument in a variety of ways. Britell claims that raising standards will lift performance levels and validate their credentials. Similar views are voiced by Popham (1981), Fisher (1980), Simon (1979), Ross (1983), and Florida parents cited in a news article (U.S. News and World Report, 1979). It is notable that in their development of this particular argument, standards advocates reveal themselves to be more oriented to interests outside the educational orbit than within it. Working educators, routinely in contact with students, have not needed institutional signifiers to denote levels of substantive attainment or mastery. Persons outside the schools have depended on credentials as indicators of ability and training. The standards advocates reflect this external insistence that the contending, overlapping, and coexisting missions of the school be compressed into a single purpose focused on inculcation of basic skills and uniform cognitive mastery. The award of credentials is made contingent on such mastery. Those writers sounding the excellence theme are concerned with stricter grading criteria, specific advancement standards, and the content of the learning underlying the credentials. The "excellence" movement has also had curricular effects: eliminating electives, infusing core courses with uniform substance, and directing instruction toward explicit goals. Such curricular changes have been viewed by Ross (1983), Popham (1981), Page (1980), and Hart (1978) as guarantees to those outside the system that schools are serving their proper social functions and not the whims or particular interests of educators.

Popham has best developed the notion defining the third motif of the pro-testing, pro-standards position, i.e., educational improvement can result from specification of standards. Popham's position has two elements: a proficiency test posits the skills which students are expected to control, and the goal of classroom instruction is to teach the skills and to raise student achievement levels both in general and in relation to the test. He explains that "clearly defined competencies will better enable teachers to provide relevant instruction and practice activities for students" (1979, p. 91). This is not "strictly speaking a debasement of the curriculum or 'teaching to the test'," he claims, but teaching the skills measured in the tests (1979, p. 91).

Rising levels of performance on tests are cited as evidence of improvement in both teaching and learning (Turlington, 1979; Popham and Rankin, 1981), although even the most ardent testing proponents acknowledge that causes of such measured improvement cannot be isolated. Writers advocating higher graduation requirements and more rigorous courses in high school believe that such actions will prevent students from squandering their time in undefined academic situations (The National Commission for Excellence in Education, 1983; The College Board, 1983). The operating assumption is that "poor" school performance results from the absence of goals and that schools, teachers, and students would function successfully if furnished with concrete endpoints for their efforts.

Other writings in the pro-standards camp address technical issues: how to implement either a program of proficiency testing or of new high school curricular standards. Neill (1978) and Hambleton and Eignor (1980), the latter at a very technical level, advise on the proper metric for proficiency testing and cover more practical "how-to" issues. Since many testing programs have been subject to court challenges, some writings focus on shaping a program to stand up to court scrutiny (Gray, 1980). Writings also suggest ways that school personnel can respond to objections from the public and educational community (Popham and Rankin, 1981; Turlington, 1979; Fisher, 1978).

The literature on the other side of the standards issue is equally diverse. In general it reflects the perspectives of educational practitioners and researchers who are skeptical of the claims of the new standards proponents. In the broadest terms their writings can be grouped in five categories. The first treats programs and standards as inappropriate responses to wrongly diagnosed educational problems, seeing them at best as ineffective tools for meaningful reform. The second group treats testing programs as misapplications of techniques of measurement: the means with which the programs attempt to solve educational problems are not adequate to the task. Too much faith has been vested in an underdeveloped technology. In the third category are those writers who view the reforms as means simultaneously to rigidify and reduce educational standards for most of the students and to raise them for a few (to levels beyond the reach of the majority). The fourth general class of writers maintain that, subtly or not, the location of educational authority shifts with the introduction of testing programs, undermining local autonomy in curricular and administrative matters. The last group object to programs because they are discriminatory: they penalize minority students for their poor performance on standardized tests and tend to consign non-achievers to intellectual oblivion.

The first group of writers believes that higher standards and stringent sanctions are inappropriate remedies for the problems of poor achievement that they set out to remedy. Linn, Madaus, and Pedulla (1982) note that tests and testing programs cannot reform the causes of student failure, although they document it and can penalize students for it. Levine (1982) and Ericson (1984), noted earlier, question the reputed dimensions of the literacy problem, especially as reported in the lay press. Both maintain that the policies contain solutions to problems that do not exist in the terms popularly supposed. Wise (1978) argues that a small percentage of students fail to develop essential skills because a small group of teachers fails to teach them. The standards movement, he claims, forgets that students arrive at school with different levels of preparation for learning and that motivation and possession of skills for learning are influenced by a range of factors, including those outside the school and those outside the control of the student.

Keefe (1980) maintains that the testing movement has been punitive and does not encourage student learning. The absence of motivation to learn cannot be compelled, as the new programs seem to assume. Coombs (1978) makes several points: while students need to be motivated to learn, he wonders whether the skills stressed in the programs are essential for success in the world, and if so, why students seem to be unaware of them. He questions the value of coercive policies and the effect of dictating curriculum and standards to teachers who need new techniques to reach poorly performing students. Finally, he maintains that the state has no business credentialling students for the market place, for, unlike professionals who voluntarily submit to state review for certification, students are forced to go to school and have not sought the imprimatur of the state for success or its stigma for failure.

Klein (1984), Sticht (1980), and McClung (1980) challenge the notion that the proficiencies required by the test are those required by the job market (although they may indeed be required for further schooling). Sticht claims that students may be literate enough to master technical skills even if their skills do not enable them to synthesize and master conceptual material. Klein holds that research shows no relationship between achievement test scores and job retention or earning power.

Pullin and McClung approach the appropriateness of tests legally. Pullin (1981) contends that tests are not measures of abilities required in the world and cites the case of a student who failed a math proficiency test but worked successfully as a cashier. McClung (1979, 1980) maintains that many students possess functional skills but cannot pass a proficiency test, leading him to claim that tests relate poorly to what is taught in school and what is required outside it.

Measurement is the second area where critics dispute the claims of the standards movement. Madaus and his collaborators argue that the assessment technology represented by the criterion-referenced instruments used in proficiency testing is not well developed. Measurement specialists thus question the substantive validity of results. The National Council on Educational Research (1980) warned against overreliance on testing, especially for withholding diplomas. They reason that the state of the art may not meet the expectations of accountability legislation and that policies based on tests ignore the "soft" factors related to achievement, i.e., non-quantifiable aspects of human beings that affect performance. Pullin and McClung provide measured arguments against the supposed reliability of the tests, claiming that they lack "curricular" and "instructional" validity.

Pullin notes the arbitrariness of cut-off scores for failure. Thus, the resulting classification of students into categories of failures and successes appears profoundly capricious. She further notes that in Florida, if three fewer correct answers were needed to pass the first test, 25 percent of the first-time failures would have passed. Glass (1978) stresses the inevitable arbitrariness of cut-off scores and states their use to award or withhold credentials constitutes professional irresponsibility. Haney and Madaus (1978) point out that minority students most frequently suffer the consequences of arbitrarily set passing scores. Fiske's article (1979) reflects on public disenchantment with standardized tests at the same time that the standards drive has seized on testing to achieve its goals. He reports on studies that show little relationship between test performance and competence in a field of professional practice.

Brickell (1978) claims that at this point in the development of educational technologies, paper and pencil tests are simply one narrow measure of ill-defined proficiencies on a broad spectrum of proficiencies and are arbitrary and unfair measures of general ability. McClung (1980) argues that scores remain arbitrary even if the community participates in setting them. The risk of capricious harm to minority students remains. Linn, Madaus, and Pedulla (1982) point out that nothing in educational or psychological theory exists to justify the selection of a cut-off score.

The third motif in the opponents' argument is that testing programs and rigid notions of standards debase schooling. Broudy (1980) warns of the development of a two-tiered educational system, one for those who master the basics with difficulty and one for those with higher competence. Ericson (1984) shares the concern, as the more able are singled out in the "excellence" movement for an augmented curriculum once the sterility and bankruptcy of the "minimum competency" curriculum has been recognized.

Bracey (1983) contends that the testing programs prefigure the spread of "didactic teaching" concerned with obsolete skills and with little relation to the functional needs of students in the world. Learning reading to pass a test is not learning the reading skills useful and adaptive to diverse life situations. Wharton (1979) objects to the new "Darwinism" in education represented by the tests in which institutional survival is limited to the proven competent. He finds standards proponents nostalgic for schooling in one-room school houses, stressing order and not skills for maneuvering in a complicated social system.

Coombs (1979) finds that the new initiatives undervalue some realms of knowledge and inflate the worth of others. Jarrett (1979) agrees with the call for excellence but stresses that it must be a democratically defined excellence spawning a plurality of elites, not a single privileged group characterized by its possession of a narrowly identified array of skills. Similarly, Spady (1980) appeals for the institutionalization of competence-based education in which a wide range of skills and proficiencies are represented. Madaus (1981) finds that teaching to the test has been the response of schools to the appearance of competence testing.

A fourth theme to emerge in the opponents' writings concerns the organizational and political consequences of testing programs and standards policies. Most policies have been devised at the state level and have been imposed on localities, some willing and others not. Labaree (1984) objected to the encroachment on the prerogative and judgment of school site staff in New York City's rigorous promotion policy which seemed to be based on district needs and not the concerns of students or teachers. Wise (1978) finds that the programs embody the ideology of educational rationalizers who have long directed schools toward achieving grandiose goals with meager means. In a similar vein, the National Education Association was reported to oppose the policies partially because of the shift of power from the local level to the state (Newsweek, 1979). Coombs (1979) also opposes the power shift implied by the movement: remote state authorities ought not to have that degree of control over individual students' educational and occupational opportunities. Madaus (1981) notes that the mandated tests are bound to have an increasing impact on schooling practice and curriculum as local districts use test results to assess and modify their curricula to improve their standing in statewide district assessments.

A final basis for opposing the tests, and one crucial for this project, is that testing and standards policies have negative adverse impact on students who are black, Hispanic, and members of other minority groups. Although the evidence is local and unsystematic, several patterns can be noted: minority students fail proficiency tests more often than white students; the tests indicate particular deficiencies in some skill areas; sanctions are applied more often to minority students than to white students; and precarious footholds of minority students in the professions and higher education are being jeopardized by the introduction of testing programs at the post-secondary level. While compelling evidence is not available, the trends in existing data suggest that new policies will not just stratify schooling into elite and mass tracks but into racial tracks as well.

Ericson (1984) points out that the beneficiaries of maximalist excellence curricula tend to be white and middle class while "non-masters" of the basics and recipients of minimalist curricula often are black and other minority students. Serow and Davies (1982) found that equality of educational opportunity was not much advanced through the operation of the

North Carolina testing and remediation program. Felice (1981) found that black students' tendency to drop out of school is closely related to their experience of failure and the sense of "impending futility" which experience introduces into their attitudes toward school work and effort. Successful completion of high school, he writes, is a major barrier to be overcome for success in life or at least for entry into the occupational structure.

In writing on the constitutional issues surrounding testing programs in Florida and elsewhere, McClung (1979, 1980) stresses the likelihood that education in proficiency-testing states could grow more segregated as students are tracked into programs based on their test performances. He maintains that in Florida, at least, the programs were biased from the outset by penalizing black students whose educations had been profoundly affected by segregated schooling. McClung's skepticism about the racial neutrality of the tests and his expectation of "injury" to black students derives from his notion of the racial bias, difficult to prove in court, in the content of the tests. Racism is intrinsic to the tests and is not an unintended by-product, he contends. The power of testing to attach labels to students that will follow them through their lives is dismaying, in part because the labeling it produces will block opportunities in general, and in part because it is so racially biased.

McCarthy (1983) reports that testing programs have been viewed as racially divisive for a number of reasons: bias in test items; differences in racial groups' performances on the tests; and racial differentiation in subsequent tracking, remediation, and credentialling policies. Phillips (1982) argues that the technology of test design does not incorporate minority students' experience in the selection and design of items. Madaus (1981) reports that even the translation of proficiency items from English into a foreign language for non-native English speakers fails to treat linguistic minorities fairly since the "culture free" concepts behind the language of the tests may not be recognizable to non-native speakers from their experience or from their instruction.

Phillips (1982) suggests that many districts, in their rush to implement programs, will not adopt safeguards to limit the discriminatory impact. Lemley (1982) notes that districts and states must struggle to find the "dimension of legality" in their programs so that obvious discrimination does not occur on a racial basis. Avoiding such an outcome should prove problematical, according to Washington and McLoyd (1982), who argue that even the most technically valid tests with established external validity ignore the culture specificity of black experiences and the competencies which certain domains of experience require and engender. These authors cite the work of Ogbu (1981) to support their claim that areas of competence are culturally required and culturally learned, depending on the needs of the learner to acquire them and the availability of the means for them to do so. Lacking "cultural" and "econological" validity, the tests will inevitably discriminate, even against extremely capable minority students.

Racial and cultural bias enters the testing process at many points: in choosing the goals of testing and the curricular material prescribed for mastery; in item selection and design; in setting cut-off scores; in applying sanctions; and in providing opportunities for subsequent demonstrations of proficiency. Linn, Madaus, and Pedulla (1982) claim that a test cannot contain enough items to assess students' levels of skill mastery as adequately as testing proponents claim. McClung (1980) emphasizes the need to rigorously search out racial bias in each test item, if tests are to be used at all: he recommends conducting pre-tests with minority students to weed out items that prove to be racially biased. Wexler (1981) argues that test items should be designed to incorporate the cognitive strategies that minority students develop through their contrasting experiences in segregated residential worlds and the predominantly white world of the school. Phillips (1982) urges that bias be rooted out by insisting that test designers reveal their design methodologies and expose any sources of bias through a requirement that local curricular goals be included in the test and that the public be involved in setting curricular and testing goals and in overseeing the design of the test.

Linn, Madaus, and Pedulla (1982) show that the risk of failing competent students lies in the undeveloped test technology itself: in Florida if the problem of bias in several test items had been corrected, more students who failed might have gotten the 41 answers correct that were necessary to pass the test. This result could have been achieved by recognizing the bias in three questions and throwing them out, or by lowering the pass score by three points. They point out that the majority of students affected by this "artifact" of testing were black.

Wint (1979) argues that standards policies ignore the genuine competence that students must and do possess to survive in the school and in their communities. Instead of penalizing students for their race and their background experiences, schools should differentiate their curricula to validate student knowledge in areas of their substantive interest.

In the next section, legal issues that have been raised and decided on testing programs, sanctions policies, and the right of institutions to impose standards will be reviewed. Ultimately, it is the court system which determines if policies are legally discriminatory or whether the effects that they may have on individuals' advancement opportunities are constitutionally acceptable.

Legal Issues and New Standards Policies

As discussed earlier, many points of opposition to proficiency testing as the proper means for institutionalizing standards crystallized in the Florida case, Debra P. v. Turlington (1979). While the basic legality of testing has seemingly been settled with Debra P., a number of issues remained unresolved in that case and have been the focus of other litigation. The existing body of legal writing on testing programs is slight, but with the precedents this literature delineates, it has come to shape the content and structure of numerous state standards policies.

The central issues in the Debra P. case were resolved in the district level federal court and on appeal in the Fifth Circuit Court. The initial trial raised many points of objection to the 1977 Florida Educational Accountability Act. They were summarized under the following headings:

- The testing program discriminated against black students;
- The content of the test bore little relation to the curriculum of school districts;
- The content of the tests were racially biased;
- The test did not apply to private school students and thus exempted students who could afford other schooling options from the risk of injury from sanctions;
- Not enough notice had been provided to students before a diploma sanction was imposed;
- The testing program was unconstitutional because it would lead to resegregation in remedial classes.

The trial court rejected most of the claims. It denied that evidence of disproportionate impact, with more minority than white students failing, showed that the program violated constitutional guarantees of equal protection. The court upheld the right of a state to impose a testing program and to set a uniform standard of literacy. It found no problem with exempting private school students from the policy and requirements, and, finally, it found no evidence that remedial programs (compensatory education) led to invidious resegregation.

The court ruled in favor of the plaintiffs on several issues. It held that since schooling in Florida had been legally segregated until 1971, the effects of this inferior and segregated schooling persisted in the performance of high school students who had begun their educations under segregation. Thus, students were not equally prepared to pass the test. The court also found that students had a right to a diploma if they had been meeting all the established graduation requirements prior to the imposition of a testing requirement. To deny students diplomas on the basis of a policy imposed at the eleventh hour was ruled contrary to law. The court thus allowed the state to carry out the testing policy but it required it to suspend the diploma sanction until students slated to graduate from high school had begun their educations in schools not legally segregated. Moreover, timely notice was required before a policy could affect students' proprietary right to a diploma. At minimum, the court recognized the effects of a dual school system and the hardships it placed on minority students. Yet, for opponents of testing, the margin of victory was slight, and an appeal followed.

At the appeals level, the court reaffirmed several trial court findings, including the right of students to a diploma, the propriety and constitutionality of proficiency tests as selection mechanisms for remedial work, and the absence of any violation of due process or equal protection guarantees in the exemption of private school students from the testing program. On the side of the plaintiffs, the court upheld the prohibition on the immediate use of the diploma sanction, claiming that it "violated equal protection as punishing black students for vestiges of a prior dual school system" (Debra P. v. Turlington, 1981 at 319).

New in this appeals decision was the ruling on test validity, which leaned toward plaintiff interests. The court wrote that "if the proficiency test covered material not taught, it was unfair and violated equal protection and due process" (at 402). The court noted "that because the state had not made any effort to make certain that the test covered material actually studied in the classrooms of the state, and because the record is insufficient in proof on that issue, the case must be remanded for further findings" (at 319).

Sending the case back to the trial court for the gathering of proof on this question did not invalidate the entire testing program. It did establish the need for the test to cover material in the school program, and not cover "general knowledge" or "life skills" or other vague curricular materials objectives: it made somewhat plainer the responsibilities of schools to formally make available the material that students need to pass the test. In Florida the testing program was forced to undergo modification against the intentions of its proponents (Turlington, 1979; Fisher, 1978, 1980).

Underlying the legal argument in the Florida case, in fact woven throughout the court decisions, is a concern for what McClung (1979) has described as the "injuries" to the students included in the program. The injuries portended by the program are first-order impediments to institutional advancement: curricular tracking, restrictions on grade promotion, and finally, denial of diplomas. These injuries, as has been seen, have the potential to engender second-order impediments to social goods and benefits, such as access to training and jobs. While the advocacy writings opposing testing have drawn heavily on projections of damaging second-order outcomes for students, McClung points out that for the courts, arguments must be developed more narrowly, focused on the barriers posed by tests to educational opportunity. Thus, the overall scope of the consequences of testing programs comes to be seen as narrowing for policy purposes as a result of the legal process.

McClung (1979) argues that competency tests will be legally vulnerable if they include items with inappropriate content -- that is, content that involves "(1) coerced belief, (2) invasion of privacy, (3) unteachable or unmeasurable content, (4) content that is not sufficiently matched with the school's curriculum and instruction, and (5) content based on grounds of race, language, culture, national origin, sex, handicap, etc." (p. 709). In his outline of the substantive framework in which the legal decision-making occurs, McClung expected that the disproportionate impact of a competency graduation testing policy on black students would constitute an injury of sufficient dimensions to challenge the testing program. He cited U.S. Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens' concurring opinion in Washington v. Davis 426 U.S. 229 (1976) that "Frequently the most probative evidence of intent will be objective evidence of what actually happened rather than evidence describing the subjective state of mind of the actor. For normally the actor is presumed to have intended the natural consequences of his deeds" (p. 690). Thus, courts, McClung reasoned, could be expected to see racial differentiation as a natural consequence of competency testing programs. Instead, the court in Washington v. Davis found no basis for viewing this and other outcomes of testing programs as invidiously injurious. Since the first-order injuries were unintentionally racially identifiable, the effort of the state to raise performance levels to higher standards (which the state is entitled to impose, the court claimed) could not be used by the opponents of testing in Florida. Indeed, the appellate court decision clearly recognized that the consequences of testing for some students could be loss of credentials and the stigma of failure. However, these injuries were deemed less damaging than the problem of standardless schooling which the policies were developed to prevent.

The courts' position on the intentionality of natural consequences of an act, cited by McClung, may be applied in some conditions; however, the action taken by the court in the Florida case on the segregative effects of testing seems to flow from the precedents cited by Serow and Davies (1982) in National Education Association v. South Carolina, 434 U.S. 1026 (1978) and Washington v. Davis, 426 U.S. 299 (1976), in which the courts held that "racially disproportionate impacts of testing programs do not constitute prima facie evidence of discrimination" (Serow and Davies, 1982 at 530).

McClung (1980) had helped develop the notions of curricular and instructional validity, defined earlier, that furnished the basis for the Fifth Circuit Court to rule on behalf of testing opponents and set limits on the vast goals of some proponents: tests are not legal unless they cover material taught. This limitation on the scope of testing has been the chief legacy of the Florida litigation: the injury imposed from such a policy could not readily be rationalized in relation to the sphere of conventional activity in the school. The related limits on testing from the Florida case have been the need to eliminate the "vestiges of segregation" before subjecting students to tests and the requirement to provide notice of intent to impose sanctions for substandard test performance.

The Florida decision in proficiency testing may be looked at within the broad framework of equity litigation and legislation. A number of observers have sought to flesh out its meaning within the broader context defined by other pivotal education-civil rights cases. Several cases have been mentioned as particularly important. In the 1968 Hobson v. Hansen, 269 F. Supp. 401 (D. C. Cir. 1967), the court ruled against the Washington, D.C. school district for its tracking policies that streamed students in racially distinctive programs. Tracking programs that had this overt effect were illegal. Yet in the Florida, South Carolina, and Washington v. Davis cases, tracking with racially distinctive results was not necessarily found illegal as long as it was limited to providing remedial education and not the basis for the development of a dual school system (Serow and Davies, 1982). While the judges in Florida and those judges sitting for other cases looked suspiciously at the racial composition of student ability groupings, especially in districts with a history of segregation, in the Florida case they found sufficient educational merit in the program to allow the questionable groupings to be made.

The right of educational officials to withhold credentials from students on the basis of the professional evaluation of student performance by school staff -- as in the case of students denied their diplomas -- has been supported by The Board of Curators of the University of Missouri v. Horowitz, 435 U.S. 78, 98 S. Ct. 948, 55 L. Ed. 2d 124 (1978). Horowitz, a medical student, was denied her degree and dismissed from her program without a hearing for "substandard" performance. The courts ruled that her charges of sex discrimination and anti-Semitism were not relevant to the actions of the medical school staff and that they were entitled to dismiss her for academic reasons without a formal hearing. This decision was seen to put the diploma sanction in proficiency testing on a firm legal ground: students could be deprived of their credentials and made to suffer consequences as long as these deprivations were academically justifiable.

The outcome of the celebrated case of Peter W. v. San Francisco Unified School District, 60 Cal. App. 3d 814, 131 Cal. Rptr. 854 (1976) has been cited in writings on law as evidence of judicial thinking on individual academic achievement as a matter of personal and not school district responsibility. This case has been seen to free schools from having to assume responsibility for assuring performance outcomes if they have made efforts to grant students adequate opportunities to learn. The decision stressed an individual model of accountability for educational progress that is at the heart of the standards initiatives. However, at the same time that the Peter W. decision stressed the evaluative authority of schools and the responsibilities of students for reaching specified performance levels, in Larry P. v. Wilson Riles, 495 F. Supp. 926 (N.D. Cal. 1979), the court ruled that school districts may not use IQ test results as the singular or primary basis for assigning students to classes for the educable mentally retarded. The tests used were not considered valid enough over a range of areas of intellectual competence to serve this purpose and were judged as racially biased. This decision has indirectly limited the extent to which proficiency test results can be used for tracking and sorting.

While the general terrain of policy choices has been roughly and unsystematically marked out by court decisions, competency testing was the explicit subject of legal action in Georgia in a case less sweeping than the one in Florida but important nonetheless. In Anderson v. Banks, 520 F. Supp. 472 S.D. GA, 1981, the plaintiff challenged a 1976 Tattnall County graduation requirement starting in 1978 that required all students to demonstrate, through tests, reading proficiencies at the ninth grade level or forfeit their diplomas. Remediation was made available. Black students performed notably worse than white students in these tests, and the bases for the court challenge resembled the issues raised in Debra P. The tests were said to be measuring the vestigial effects of segregation; students received inadequate notice of the diploma sanctions; and the test discriminated against the handicapped (Flygare, 1981). The court rejected all these grounds for opposing the testing policy. However, its ruling suspended the application of program sanctions on the grounds of the curricular invalidity of the test. It was shown to the satisfaction of the court that the test used was not valid because classroom instructors used materials which were not universally in use in the county.

The mixed response within the courts to the new testing programs has puzzled the legal community. In a brief review of the crucial court decisions, Citron (1982), of the Educational Commission of the States, notes that some judges have found the practical implications of precedents unwieldy, even when they consider the guidance legally useful. The picture the court decisions present is that testing programs and setting standards are judicially viewed as legitimate functions of state or local educational authorities. On the questions of substantive content, there tends to be no acceptance of the notion that racial bias can affect the tests in subtly institutionalized ways. Bias so far is not deemed to be shown by the poor performance of one class of test-takers on particular questions, and technical procedures for demonstrating bias psychometrically have not advanced far enough to convince professionals or jurists.

Competency testing programs and standards have been found by courts to be legitimate educational functions; bias, if it is viewed as existing at all, has been successfully challenged on material which was not taught. While sanctions included in new standards programs must be well publicized in advance of application, and while such programs may not carry over the effects of earlier segregation, disproportionate impact in and of itself has not convinced the courts of racial bias in design, operation, or outcome of the new competency initiatives.

Conclusion

There can be little doubt that the overall performance of schools and students has disappointed the public and professional communities. Yet the literature raises serious questions about the wisdom of testing programs, lofty standards, and severe sanctions as incentives for overall educational improvement. Does a threat or a guarantee of failure encourage learning? This question of principle, raised implicitly by Maeroff (1978) and Coombs (1979), has great implications for the kinds of policies enacted to promote learning. Have schools really grown so utterly soft and standardless that students' motives to learn have been thwarted? Can linguistic, cultural, and normative discontinuities between the worlds of the home, of the street, and of the school be overridden by the appearance of new standards and threats embedded in testing programs? The evidence in test performance results thus far suggests that these hurdles to optimal performance will not be overcome by waving the testing wand; instead, the exclusionary power of background variables may well certify, routinize, and concretize school failure.

Schools that have testing programs show that failure rates drop with each cohort of examinees. Is this because students become more serious? Is it because the curriculum has changed -- perhaps in the form of teaching to the test? Indeed, testing proponents and opponents alike have predicted this development -- proponents seeking to standardize and universalize curricula and opponents spurning it as a debasement of curriculum for all students, even those in need of firm grounding in basic skills. Clear research could show the extent and ways that programs have modified curricula, leaving it open to discovery whether "measurement driven" curricula are the proper vehicles for realizing desirable educational goals. The possibility of firmly institutionalizing a two-tiered educational system also needs to be considered for its desirability since it has been developing organically through the accumulation of testing requirements, promotion standards, and stricter post-secondary entrance and advancement requirements. If the institutionalization of "merit" curricula irrevocably separates the academically able from the academically deficient, an area of urgent policy concern must be that these categories not be racially distinctive.

The literature suggests that the decision to adopt a testing program raises a succession of subsidiary issues: is it to be used diagnostically or evaluatively? Is the unit of analysis to be the student, the school, the district, or the curriculum? Will there be sanctions attached to "substandard" performance? What areas of competence will be selected for measurement and mastery? Who will choose these? Indeed, how will cut-off scores be set if the program requires failures? What will be the politically acceptable number of failures? How does this contrast with the number of failures produced by selecting a cut-off score on the basis of an "absolute" performance standard? Would this acceptable rate of failure coincide with absolute failures? Can it be established that these rates relate to actual levels of mastery? Indeed, is performance on a test indicative of substantive competence?

If students fail, how often can they retake the test to try to earn their credentials? Is remediation available? Is it individualized and concentrated or is it diffuse, general, and voluntary? How committed is the school district to raising its student pass rate instead of certifying its failures, accomplishing the former by improving teaching and financially supporting remediation? Are safeguards in place to prevent remedial classes or "non"-master tracks from becoming pockets of racial segregation? Are safeguards in place to secure the self-esteem and motivation of students who fail, acquire the stigma of failure, and may have to drop out of a school routine and the all-important social network for remediation?

The research has noted the discussion about the problem of school leavers -- students who fail proficiency tests and leave or those who anticipate never meeting elevated graduation requirements and who drop out for that reason. What rates of this kind of school leaving are acceptable within a school district? Has it been established beyond the level of rhetoric that the content of standards or proficiency tests is essential to the tasks facing students, or is it in good part arbitrary selection and advancement criteria? In the design and administration of a program, has the source of authority been established to the satisfaction of educators, voters and taxpayers, and political figures? Is the shift of control from the school site to the district and from the district to the state an outcome that is deemed good or desirable if it is implied by implementing a program?

Pipho (1978) has remarked that the testing movement has been beset by contradictory impulses from its outset. Similar contradictions could be developed for the excellence movement. In a summary enumeration of the contradictions in testing policy he points out that in testing,

- there is great difficulty measuring any improvement in achievement and tracing it to standards or tests;
- the movement was imposed on educators who are skeptical of its claimed benefits;
- states have imposed performance standards that formerly were locally determined;

> - programs claim to measure "life skills" for on-the-job performance, but tests measure "school skills" that are not transferable to non-school settings;
> - standards are set by few people -- implicitly by test designers -- because legislators assume that performance levels are non-problematic and self-evident;
> - programs have been mandated with little money to implement them -- often giving little support to remediation efforts;
> - there have been over 30 states that have implemented programs, each independently. Yet all programs have moved in the same direction, suggesting the move toward control at the national level through the influence of national testing companies. The public, however, is adamantly opposed to national controls on education (1978, p. 585).

Pipho points out that there seems little progress in shaping educational policy in ways that resolve these contradictions. Implicitly his listing suggests the major fears of many critics of competency testing and new standards: that educational authority will become more centralized, signaling a loss of local discretion and control, and the curriculum of schooling will become increasingly the same. The onset of the "excellence" movement has introduced further uniformity in educational policy. It has embodied multiple goals and produced a range of unintended effects. In recent years, research has tried to demonstrate the contradictions in outcomes from policies, to reveal as predictable many effects that in the past were unforeseeable, speculative, and unintentional. This review has attempted to show what the literature suggests the effects of these controversial moves toward stricter standards have tended to be, in the hope that the goal of equal educational opportunity and improved educational and professional access for black and minority students will not fall victim to a fetish for sterile, discriminatory standards and narrow, anti-educational policies.

Chapter 3

BACKGROUND ON COMPETENCY TESTING PROGRAMS IN LOUISIANA AND NORTH CAROLINA

Introduction

Competency or proficiency testing programs in Louisiana and North Carolina are undergirded by state law. Whereas North Carolina introduced proficiency testing at the secondary school level, Louisiana initially used grade-to-grade implementation beginning at the elementary level. Thus it would have been 1992 before all grades from 2 to 12 would have been included in the Louisiana testing program. In June 1986, however, the Louisiana legislature modified this policy by enacting legislation mandating competency testing at grades 3, 5, and 7, beginning with the 1987-88 school year and at grade 11 in the 1988-89 school year. Although the testing administration policy differed, both states began their proficiency testing programs at about the same time. To provide a fuller understanding of the differences in the testing programs in Louisiana and North Carolina, the following themes are developed in this chapter: historical background of the testing programs, test development procedures, provisions for special education students, parent awareness efforts, and student test performance.

Louisiana

Historical Background

Louisiana's Basic Skills Testing Program was initiated in the 1981-82 school year. Implementation of the testing program was earlier mandated by legislative Act No. 750, R.S. 17:24.4 enacted during the 1979 regular session of the Louisiana legislature. (See Appendix A for a copy of this legislation and its Amendment, Senate Bill No. 921, Act 886 of 1984.)

The Basic Skills Testing legislation called for Louisiana's State Department of Education to develop curriculum guides in all required subjects and to direct and require each local school district in the state to develop a pupil progression plan. These plans were to define grade level promotion standards based on performance in the basic skills of reading, writing, and mathematics. Although the Basic Skills Testing Program began with the second grade, successively higher grade levels were to be added each year beyond the 1981-82 school year in accord with legislative intent. By 1992 all grade levels from two through twelve were to be included in the program. Passage of the grade level tests, according to the regulations, was not only required, but also the principal criterion for student promotion (Louisiana Basic Skills Testing Program, A Chronology, 1984).

Louisiana's 1977 legislative Act No. 621, R.S. 17:391-17:391.10, predated its current Basic Skills Testing Program (see Appendix A). Through this Act, student performance expectations, as specified by minimum competency standards in reading, writing, and mathematics for grades K-12, were created. Once established, these standards became the basis of the Louisiana State Assessment Program which, since 1978-79, has provided student performance data in reading, writing, and mathematics. The Louisiana Assessment Program as distinct from the Basic Skills Testing Program initially was implemented at grades 4, 8, and 11. The first assessment test focused on reading. A mathematics test was developed during the 1978-79 school year and a writing test during school year 1979-80 (Peck, 1982).

In 1981, administration of the state assessment program changed from grades 4, 8, and 11 to grades 3, 7, and 10. This permitted the test results to be made available to teachers earlier, thereby providing an opportunity for them to use the results for diagnostic and prescriptive teaching (Louisiana State Assessment and State Basic Skills Testing Program Update, 1981; Peck, 1982). Ultimately, the Basic Skills Testing Program was to have replaced the Louisiana State grade 3, 7, and 10 Assessment Program (Peck, 1982).

In June 1986 the Louisiana legislature amended and reenacted its Competency-Based Education Program, a component of which is the Lousiana Educational Assessment Program. According to this Act, No. 146, House Bill No. 1324, which is displayed in

Appendix A, the Educational Assessment Program is to be implemented by the Louisiana department of education with the approval of the state board of elementary and secondary education. The legislation calls for the implementation of developmental readiness student screening for placement and for planning instruction during the 1986-87 school year. Beginning with the 1987-88 school year, such screening will occur upon initial entry into kindergarten. The Act also mandates that criterion-referenced tests developed from state curriculum standards be piloted in grades three and five and, if funds are available, grade seven during the 1986-1987 school year with implementation during the 1987-1988 school year if recommended by the state's testing commission and approved by the state board of elementary and secondary education. The Act further specifies that an eleventh grade criterion-referenced test be piloted no later than the 1987-1988 school year and implemented no later than 1988-1989, and that, beginning with the 1987-1988 school year, a national norm-referenced test be given statewide annually in at least three grade levels (as yet unspecified).

The amended and reenacted legislation emphasizes the importance of local participation in defining local goals and objectives for pupil progression and placement. Such goals and objectives, however, must be compatible with the Louisiana Competency-Based Education Program. Remediation is also to be provided students who fail the tests. Cost of the Educational Assessment Program is to be met by the state department of education, but local schools can absorb costs as they find necessary and appropriate. During the 1986-87 school year local districts had the option to administer a norm-referenced test of their choice to students in grades three, five, and seven and submit the results to the state department of education. In this one-time arrangement, the state was to pay half the costs of the testing program.

The intent of Louisiana's testing program is to ensure that its schools are accountable for the education of all students at minimum or basic levels of competence. To accomplish this the program establishes standards by which the performance of all students in selected curriculum areas can be monitored. Students not achieving at expected performance levels are provided compensatory and remedial assistance.

Test Development

Development of pre-1986 reading, writing, and mathematics basic skills tests was assumed by the Louisiana state department of education and involved local school educators, parents, state department of education staff, and university and testing agency consultants. Separate advisory councils composed of teachers, college professors, and specialists in appropriate content areas were established to develop performance standards in subject areas covered by the testing program. The councils also identified teacher instructional standards and grade level skills students could be expected to meet. Each local school district was represented on at least one advisory council.

In addition to these advisory councils, members of previously appointed state assessment program advisory committees in reading, writing, and mathematics were involved in establishing an order of priority for student grade level skills in these subject areas. Advisory committee members assisted in determining grade level objectives. Based on the recommendations of the advisory councils and committees, general test descriptions and test item specifications were developed by the state department of education staff in collaboration with consultants from Educational Testing Service (ETS), Princeton, and Louisiana State University (Christian, 1982). Classroom teachers recommended by local school district superintendents participated in an item-writing workshop in which twenty test items per objective or mastery skill were developed. State department of education staff and selected advisory committee members conducted an initial content validity review of the items, and ETS consultants the final review.

The second grade basic skills test in language arts and mathematics was pilot tested in the spring of 1981 using a 20 percent probability sample of all second grade students in Louisiana's public schools. The sampling scheme was designed by the Research Triangle, Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina, and included 12,000 students from 480 classrooms in 462 schools. Pilot tests for the third and fourth grade Basic Skills Tests were conducted in spring of 1982 (Louisiana Basic Skills Testing Program, 1982-83). Following the analysis of the pilot testing, usable test items were placed in a computerized item bank from which they could be retrieved for future test construction. Test security was to be maintained through an annual revision of the tests using the item bank (Mills, 1982).

The final versions of the basic skills tests contained two major sections: language arts (reading and writing skills), and mathematics. For the second grade the test contained 60 language arts and 60 mathematics questions. The third grade test consisted of 92 language arts questions and 100 mathematics questions. The fourth grade list included 84 language arts and 88 mathematics questions (The Basic Skills Testing Program, What Is It and How Does it Affect My Child?, 1983).

Acceptable minimum levels of test performance were based on teacher judgments and test administrator expectations held for student test performance, or ability to pass the test, in relationship to actual classroom performance. The recommended performance standard was 75 percent in each subject area tested for the second and third grade tests and 80 percent for the fourth grade tests. The third grade test, for example, required students to answer correctly 69 of the 92 language arts items and 75 of the 100 mathematics items (Louisiana Basic Skills Testing Program, 1982-83; Louisiana Basic Skills Testing Program, A Chronology, 1984).

Louisiana's state department of education appointed an ongoing grade two to twelve basic skills planning commission to review the grade level Basic Skills Tests before they were finalized. In addition to two persons named by each local school district superintendent, individuals on the commission represented students classed as exceptional, limited-English proficient, non-English proficient, minority, and disadvantaged. The commission's activities included reviewing the basic skills test items for sex, cultural, social, and ethnic group bias, appropriateness of the test items in relationship to the classroom instruction students should have been receiving, and minimum acceptable levels of test performance (Christian, 1982). A similar commission is to be involved in recommending the criterion-referenced tests mandated by the 1986 amended and reenacted testing legislation.

Provisions for Special Education Students

The Education of All Handicapped Children Act, P.L. 94-142, and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504, mandates that if federal funds are received, all handicapped children receive a free, appropriate education in the least restrictive environment without discrimination. Thus special education students are not automatically excluded from the state's testing program. Decisions to require special education students to meet the established minimum acceptable levels on basic skills test performance are made in conjunction with students' individual educational programs (IEP's). When special education students are required, as part of their IEP's, to meet state minimum basic skills, they are considered to be enrolled in a "specially designed regular instruction" program. Such students must satisfy the basic skills testing program performance standards. They are promoted through the normal grade level sequence and receive a regular graduation diploma.

Special education students not expected to meet minimum grade level basic skills requirements in conjunction with their IEP's are assigned to an "alternative to regular placement" program. These students are exempt or excluded from the regular basic skills testing program. As a result of being assigned to this alternative program, the special education student receives a Certificate of Achievement instead of the regular graduation diploma, a consequence which is acknowledged in writing by his or her parents. Achievement certificates are awarded when school attendance requirements and 70 percent of the IEP objectives have been met. These IEP objectives are based on state developed alternative performance standards for either mildly, moderately, severely, or profoundly handicapped students. Decisions to place special education students in either the "specially designed regular instruction" or the "alternative to regular placement" category are reviewed annually (Gillespie, 1982).

With respect to test modifications for special education students, Gillespie (1982) indicates that for the 1981-82 Basic Skills Test, and presumably for the years following, Louisiana approved the use of Braille and large-print editions of the test, recording of student answers by the test administrator, extended time for test administration, sign language test instructions, individual or small group test administration, repeated test directions, reading of the mathematics test to students, and allowing students to mark responses in the test booklets.

Parent Awareness

A variety of media forms were used by the state department of education to ensure that parents were informed about the testing program. For example, a fact-filled brochure for parents of second, third, and fourth grade public school students, The Basic Skills Testing Program ... What Is It and How Does It Affect My Child (1983), was distributed by the state department of education. Television, newspaper, and radio coverage were used to disseminate information. As of 1982 the state department had distributed at least 250,000 calendars of skills to families with students in grades one, two, or three. These calendars indicated, for each day of the designated month, grade level skill activities with which parents could assist their children (Peck, 1982). Finally, the department staff made presentations to state and local student advisory groups, e.g., Coalition for Citizens with Disabilities and the Association for Children with Learning Disabilities, to explain the testing program (Gillespie, 1982).

North Carolina

Historical Background

The competency testing movement in North Carolina schools formally began in 1977, with the passage of two legislative measures. One measure, H.B. 204, established the "High School Graduation and Competency Program." The other, H.B. 205, inaugurated the state's annual testing program, a diagnostic program similar to the then existing assessment practices in North Carolina and in other states. While the two programs responded to the same perceived problem of poor student performance, they were developed and administered separately.

The Annual Testing Program, covering first, second, third, sixth and ninth grade students in the state's public schools, was inaugurated in 1978. The program was created through Article 12 of Chapter 115 of the General Statutes, enacted in 1977. The law called for the gubernatorial appointment of a Testing Commission responsible to the board of education. Its task was to oversee, on an annual basis, a statewide assessment of student achievement "to help local school systems and teachers to identify and correct student needs in basic skills." The legislation explicitly declared that the program was not to evaluate teachers or to provide a basis for comparing students to one another for ranking purposes. The law noted that in the first three grades, the test scores were not to be the exclusive or primary criteria for student promotion (see Appendix A).

In the implementation of this law, efforts were made to select tests that would conform as closely as possible with the curriculum of the state's schools. The test that was eventually selected as valid for the North Carolina schools, and that has been in use since 1978, is the California Achievement Test published by McGraw-Hill.

Initially the law called for testing grade level performance in reading, language, and mathematics. Since initiation of the program, moves have been made to supplement these tests at the higher grade levels with tests of additional subject areas -- writing, science, and social studies. Student tests are accompanied by a demographic questionnaire recording students' gender, parents' levels of education, students' ethnicity, and their enrollment in federal compensatory education programs. Performance on these tests can thus be analyzed by ethnicity, gender, family background, and socio-economic status.

The "competency" testing program, effective August 1978, received several charges, expressed in the legislative intent and purpose. The program was to

> assure that high school graduates possess the minimum skills thought necessary to function as members of society; to provide a means of identifying strengths and weaknesses in the education process; and to establish additional means for making the educational system accountable to the public for its results. (Statutory Article 11, Chapter 115c, General Statutes, in North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, Test Coordinator's Handbook 1983-84, p. 1).

The first administration of the competency test occurred in October 1978, although a pilot testing program had been carried out in the preceding spring. According to the statute, all eleventh graders were required to pass a test of basic skills in two curricular areas, reading and mathematics. The test was developed by the state department of public instruction.

A passing score on the test was required for graduation. Students would be allowed, however, to retake the test if they failed it. They could repeat the portion(s) of the test failed until they passed, up to age 21. School districts would be required to provide remedial attention to students who failed. Additionally, the law created a 15-member testing commission, appointed by the governor from various fields concerned with education, to put the provisions of the law into practice.

Most of the details of the testing program were developed by the professional staff of the department of public instruction, working at times with consultants, but always under the supervision of the state's testing commission. A number of the implementation specifications are interesting. While students who fail the test may not receive diplomas, they may be allowed to participate in graduation ceremonies. That policy must be set by the local school authorities. While schools must offer remediation to these students, schools may design their own programs for doing so. State money was made available for remediation, but districts were informed that they could offer remediation beyond that which the state would finance. Indeed, they were informed that they could identify "high risk" students in advance of their taking the test, and offer special instruction before the junior year test date. Administrative regulations further established that students transferring into North Carolina schools would have to take the test; that non-public school students were not required to take the test, but must be offered some form of a nationally recognized achievement test; and that students in diploma equivalency programs must be offered the test. The law established that test scores were confidential. Regulations required that local education agencies record the gender, race, level of parental education, and special educational needs of all test takers on the answer sheet to track test-performance of students in various demographic categories.

Test Development

In recognition of the need to have legitimacy in the eyes of various constituencies and to incorporate the perspectives of school practitioners, the state has involved several groups in the development of its competency testing program: consultants, educators, parents, and citizens have been included. These groups have been most visible in the selection of commercially prepared test instruments and items: that is, in the identification of skills which minimally functional students must possess, in the determination of the cut-off scores for test failure, and in the review of test materials and procedures for "cultural bias."

The chief roles played by consultants have been technical in nature. First, testing specialists from private industry, academic institutions, and state agencies were involved in test development, either by submitting test and scoring packages to the state's testing commission, or by reviewing the materials and sharing their evaluations of them with the policymakers. Gallagher (1981) reports that more than 15 instruments were submitted and reviewed by the commission early in its work. Math and reading teachers also served as consultants, advising the commission on the suitability of the various tests for the aims of the legislation. Professionals and consultants in research and measurement, who served as a Technical Advisory Committee, participated in the selection of a strategy for the spring 1978 testing program field study.

At the outset, teachers were asked to identify the skills that should be included in the test and to review the instruments submitted to the commission for consideration. Teachers, principals, and counselors participated in the standard-setting activities that the commission organized in several regions across the state. They took the proposed test and individually rated the appropriateness of the items and the underlying skills as indicators of minimal proficiency. Test ratings and recommendations for passing scores were analyzed for presentation to teachers, principals, and counselors. Parents and citizens also provided assessments of the instruments (Gallagher, 1981).

The North Carolina testing program drew upon the instruments available in the market. Three of the numerous sample tests were selected for the spring 1978 pilot study, and administered to equivalent samples of 78,000 high school students across the state (Gallagher, 1981, p. 243). Test results were analyzed and comparisons of student performance on each instrument made. These scores were also compared with eleventh grade students' performance on the nationally normed California Achievement Test battery for the ninth grade. Scores on the various sample tests were found to be highly intercorrelated. However, proportions of students successfully answering specific sections of each of the tests provided the baseline for setting a pass-fail standard.

With the data on successful performance in mind, parents and citizens, teachers, principals, and counselors made their recommendations on the appropriate passing scores and the extent to which the skills called for in specific test items should be held by a minimally competent state high school graduate. Jaeger (1982) reports that, at the conclusion of the statewide exercise in standard setting, parents and citizens recommended the highest passing scores, while teachers recommended the lowest in reading and principals recommended the lowest in math. Jaeger also reports that none of the demographic characteristics of the judges systematically varied with their evaluations of items or with their recommended scores, except for race. For example,

> Black judges had a mean recommended standard on the reading test that was almost 12 points lower than white judges. The difference is more than a standard deviation. The pattern is similar for those rating items on the mathematics test. The mean standard recommended by black judges was eights points lower than the mean standard recommended by white judges. This difference is more than half a standard deviation (Jaeger, 1982, p. 471).

The findings of these exercises were reported to the commission members, along with several other data sets, including comparisons of norm-referenced and competency test results. Grade equivalents of various percentages of successful answers on the proficiency exam, and proportions of students achieving those performance levels were indicated. Data also included results of tests taken by students judged as competent and incompetent by staff in a sample of schools across the state (Gallagher, 1981). The commission members finally set the score themselves in a series of secret ballots. Members voted, learned their results, reflected on their decisions overnight, and voted again. Gallagher reports that the final ballot reflected a unanimous judgment that 72 percent of the answers be correct on the reading test, and that 64 percent be correct on the math test.

As noted earlier, all items included in the field study were reviewed for cultural bias. Items judged by reviewers as potentially biased were noted and students' performances on them were closely analyzed to determine whether the subjective assessments of the raters were objectively validated. In fact, students' performances on all test items were statistically analyzed, enabling the testing officials to determine patterns in items which were consistently answered incorrectly among the lowest scoring students compared with those among the higher scoring students. Items which displayed bias were modified or removed, according to Gallagher (1981). The total number of items modified or removed from the tests "exceeded 40 percent on reading and 50 percent on mathematics" (1981, p. 249).

Provisions for Special Education Students

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction reports working to sustain the state's commitment to standards, while also honoring its obligations to students under the federal "Education for all Handicapped Children" legislation, P.L. 94-142. Special education students could be excused from taking the proficiency test but they could not receive a diploma without passing it. Students whose educational programs were under the supervision of a special needs committee, following an individual education plan (IEP), were permitted to take a modified version of the proficiency test. Thus, students were entitled to take the test at home, under proper supervision, if they were home-bound. The test was printed in large type and in braille for students with visual deficiencies. Audio cassettes were prepared and oral administrations were authorized. Test administration could be spread over a series of days if the logistics entailed in its administration were sufficiently taxing to affect the actual performance of the student on the given material (North Carolina Annual Testing Program, Basic Skills Test Coordinator's Handbook, 1983-84, pp. 1-2; 13-25).

Student Test Performance: Louisiana and North Carolina

The results of successive annual administrations of the Louisiana and North Carolina competency tests are relatively similar. In both states the competency test performance of students has improved since the tests were initiated. In the 1980 North Carolina test, 90 percent of students met the passing requirement in reading and 85 percent in mathematics. For the first administration of the Fall 1985 test, 94.4 percent of the juniors passed the reading section and 91.5 percent, the mathematics component (Report of Student Performance, Fall 1985, North Carolina Competency Test Program).

In the 1982-83 Louisiana test administration, 94 percent of the second and 91 percent of the third grade regular students passed the language arts portion of the Basic Skills competency test. For the mathematics section, 96 percent of the regular second grade and 88 percent of the regular third grade students passed. In both instances, student test performance improved slightly over scores attained in the 1981-82 test administration (Louisiana Basic Skills Testing Program, 1982-83).

Not surprisingly, student test scores have some association with family educational background. Students with poorly educated parents tend to fail more often than others. Using North Carolina as an example, between 1978 and 1983, 98 percent of the juniors whose parents studied beyond high school passed the reading competency test and 97 percent, the mathematics test, the first time these were administered. In contrast, an average of only 71 percent of the juniors who were from homes in which the educational level of parents was eighth grade or less passed the reading test, and 70 percent, the mathematics test during the same time frame. Moreover, the test performance of white students generally exceeded that of black students. Between 1978 and 1985 the average percentage of North Carolina juniors passing the reading test the first time was 97 percent for white students and 82 percent for black students. For mathematics, it was 95 percent for white students and 77 percent for black students (Report of Student Performance, Fall 1983, North Carolina Competency Test Program).

Overall, competency test passing rates have risen slightly in North Carolina and Louisiana. Yet, there are still students who do not pass the test, either on retakes or ever. In a 1980 study of testing outcomes in North Carolina, Serow and Davies (1982) found that 4.9 percent of the students in a statewide sample failed three administrations of the test, and another 6.4 percent withdrew from school after failing the test (no causal claims are being made in this connection). When these figures are broken down by ethnicity, the data reveal that 11.3 percent of the black students failed three administrations of the tests, compared with 1.3 percent of the whites. Additionally, 14.4 percent of the black students withdrew after failing compared with 2.2 percent of the white students. Serow and Davies further point out that black students comprise 35.7 percent of the sample, but account for 82.3 percent of test failures. While they found that black and white students failing the first administration of the test received equal amounts of remediation, the relative effectiveness of remediation varied by ethnic category. In a second administration of the test, scores for whites who received remedial instruction rose more than scores of blacks who received additional attention and scores of students who received no remediation. In fact, in reading, whites with no remediation gained more than blacks with remediation (Serow and Davies, 1982).

Whether increased percentages of students passing the competency tests means that the quality of teaching has improved, that students are studying harder, that the curricula are more closely aligned with the test, or that teachers are teaching to the test, cannot be ascertained from the data. To some degree, perhaps several or all of these reasons may be correct. To what extent either of them, or others not specified, may contribute to greater percentages of students meeting the test standards is a topic for future study. The conclusion that can be reached at this time is that the number of students passing the competency tests in Louisiana and North Carolina has increased slightly since the testing programs were initiated.

Summary

Legislatively mandated competency testing programs in Louisiana and North Carolina began in the late 1970's and early 1980's. The programs were designed to indicate that students were acquiring minimal levels of competence generally in reading, writing, and mathematics. Both states now have required eleventh grade graduation tests although Louisiana originally would not have had testing through the twelfth grade before 1992.

Competency testing is currently required at grades 1, 2, 3, 6, 9, and 11 in North Carolina and 3, 5, 7, and 11 in Louisiana.

The participation of parents and community members, teachers, and local school administrators was used in defining pupil performance standards, reviewing test instruments (in North Carolina), and examining test items for cultural or racial bias. The state department of education and professional test designers were used to develop the Louisiana tests. The California Achievement Test was selected for use in North Carolina. Testing commissions were established in both states to provide general advice to testing program policymakers and implementors. Remediation for students failing the tests is a feature of testing programs in both states.

Special education students in Louisiana and North Carolina are not excused from taking the graduation competency tests if the testing is incorporated into their individual education plans (IEP's). To accommodate special handicapping conditions the tests can be printed in large type or braille, administered orally, or given over several days. Special education students can be excused from taking the graduation competency test but can not receive a diploma without passing it.

Since the initiation of the competency testing programs in both states, student passing rates have increased. From data in North Carolina, however, it is apparent that students with poorly educated parents tend to fail more often than others. Moreover, more black students than white fail the test, and more of the black students failing drop out of school. Causality is not explicit from the data, however.

Chapter 4

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The fundamental aim of this study is to examine the perceptions held by college students and educational officials in Louisiana and North Carolina regarding the use of high school graduation competency examinations and college examinations used either for advancement to study in upper division academic fields or for graduation. The study also examines relationships between competency test perceptions held by Louisiana and North Carolina college students and their personal and educational characteristics. An important consideration in this context is whether competency testing programs have affected the educational plans or career aspirations of college students in these states, particularly those students who are black.

Design

A two-step intermediate unit sampling procedure was employed to generate the students on which the analysis focused. First, a sample of colleges was selected in each state in which the survey was conducted, Louisiana and North Carolina. Second, randomly selected students within these colleges were sampled through the use of a written questionnaire. In addition to this sampling procedure for collecting information from students, interviews were conducted with selected school principals, school superintendents, state department of education officials, and administrators in the colleges from which students were sampled.

Selection of Institutions

Historically and predominantly black and white public and private two- and four-year colleges and universities were identified in Louisiana and North Carolina using the following classifications:

A. Historically, predominantly black	4-year public university or college
B. Historically, predominantly black	4-year private university or college
C. Historically, predominantly black	2-year public university or college
D. Historically, predominantly white	2-year public university or college
E. Historically, predominantly white	4-year private university or college
F. Historically, predominantly white	4-year public regional university or college
G. Historically, predominantly white	4-year major flagship university

In each of the institutional categories, colleges and universities were purposely selected on the basis of geographical location and size. We sought first to ensure that, to the extent possible, colleges were located in the various major black population areas of each state so that a reasonable cross section of black students would be included in the sample.* In some instances, however, geographical location was precluded by institutional category.

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* Population data for metropolitan statistical areas, 1980, show that major population areas for blacks within the two states are:

North Carolina	Total	(Black)
Charlotte-Gastonia-Rock Hill	971,000	(194,000)
Raleigh-Durham	561,000	(147,000)
Greensboro-Winston-Salem-High Point	852,000	(162,000)

Louisiana	Total	(Black)
Baton Rouge	494,000	(138,000)
New Orleans	1,256,000	(409,000)
Shreveport	333,000	(110,000)

(U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1983, pp. 20-25.)

That is, since there was only one major public flagship institution and there were relatively few public two-year historically, predominantly black or white colleges in each state, selection of colleges and universities in these categories was more a function of type than location. With respect to size, the largest of the public and private traditional, predominantly black colleges and universities in each state were selected to ensure a diverse pool of black students. Generally, these institutions were located in each state's major black population areas. Accordingly, the following institutions, by category, were originally identified for inclusion in the sample:

A. Historically, predominantly black 4-year public university or college
   1. Southern University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana
   2. North Carolina A & T University, Greensboro, North Carolina

B. Historically, predominantly black 4-year private university or college
   3. Xavier University, New Orleans, Louisiana
   4. St. Augustine's, Raleigh, North Carolina

C. Historically, predominantly black 2-year public university or college
   5. Southern University, Shreveport-Bossier City, Louisiana
   6. Durham Technical Institute, Durham, North Carolina

D. Historically, predominantly white 2-year public university or college
   7. Delgado College-City Park, New Orleans, Louisiana
   8. Central Piedmont Community College, Charlotte, North Carolina

E. Historically, predominantly white 4-year private university or college
   9. Loyola University, New Orleans, Louisiana
   10. Mars Hill College, Mars Hill, North Carolina

F. Historically, predominantly white 4-year public regional university or college
   11. University of Southwestern University, Lafayette, Louisiana
   12. University of North Carolina, Charlotte, North Carolina

G. Historically, predominantly white major public flagship university

13. Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana

14. University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, North Carolina

Letters explaining the study and inviting participation were sent to the presidents of the above institutions. These were followed up with telephone calls. Several of the selected institutions declined the invitation to participate for various reasons. First, the major flagship institutions in each state did not find it expedient to participate. Louisiana State University felt that because of recent student unrest on its campus a request to their students to become involved in the study would be ill-advised. The University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill indicated that they were under a court sanctioned desegregation consent decree and thus did not feel that their participation in a study focused on what was considered to be a racially sensitive issue -- competency testing -- was legally appropriate. Since there were no other major historically, predominantly white public flagship universities in either state, this category of institutions had to be dropped from the sampling scheme.

Other identified institutions that refused to participate in the study were the historically, predominantly white 4-year public regional universities in Louisiana and the 2-year historically, predominantly white public college in North Carolina. In Louisiana, the University of Southwestern Louisiana, Lafayette, indicated that it could not assign professional staff to the study for site coordination and thus refused to participate. As a replacement, the following institutions, which met the selection criteria for this category, were sequentially invited to participate in the study: Northwestern State University of Louisiana, Natchitoches; Northeast Louisiana State University, Monroe; and, McNeese State University, Lake Charles. All declined the invitation to participate for reasons not specified. No other institution meeting the criteria for this category was identified. Thus, for Louisiana, we were unable to include an historically, predominantly white 4-year public regional institution in the sample. In North Carolina, Central Piedmont Community College did not wish to become involved in the study and no replacement college meeting the designated criteria was identified. Although not a public institution, Duke University was invited to take part in the study because of its prestige and its proximity to the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. The invitation was accepted.

As a result of the declinations, and the acceptance of Duke University, the institutions agreeing to be part of the study included five in Louisiana and six in North Carolina (see Appendix B for copies of the letter to college and university presidents inviting participation in the study and their responses). By category, they are:

A. Historically, predominantly black 4-year public university or college
   1. Southern University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana
   2. North Carolina A & T University, Greensboro, North Carolina

B. Historically, predominantly black 4-year private university or college
   3. Xavier University, New Orleans, Louisiana
   4. St. Augustine's, Raleigh, North Carolina

C. Historically, predominantly black 2-year public university or college
   5. Southern University, Shreveport-Bossier City, Louisiana
   6. Durham Technical Institute, Durham, North Carolina

D. Historically, predominantly white 2-year public university or college
   7. Delgado College-City Park, New Orleans, Louisiana

E. Historically, predominantly white 4-year private university or college
   8. Loyola University, New Orleans, Louisiana
   9. Mars Hill College, Mars Hill, North Carolina

F. Historically, predominantly white 4-year public regional university or college
   10. University of North Carolina, Charlotte, North Carolina

G. Historically, predominantly white 4-year prestigious private university
   11. Duke University, Durham, North Carolina

Selection of Students

After identifying the sample colleges and universities, and ascertaining their willingness to participate in the study, each institution was requested to appoint a site coordinator. These individuals were asked to facilitate the selection of students to be surveyed, to distribute and collect student questionnaires, and to provide desired institutional background data (see Appendix B for the list of site coordinators).

Initially the study's project staff planned to randomly select students to be surveyed through a mailed questionnaire from the colleges and universities in the sample. This would have been accomplished by having each participating school submit a list of all undergraduate students designated by ethnicity, sex, and class standing. From these lists, students were to have been numbered and a percentage of them randomly selected. This procedure was abandoned because most of the selected colleges and universities indicated that mailing complete student lists to us was a breach of student confidentiality. Each institution in the study did agree, however, to generate a randomly selected list of students and to have the site coordinators distribute the student questionnaires via U.S. or campus mail. Site coordinators also collected and forwarded the completed questionnaires to the project office or requested the students to mail them in self-addressed, stamped envelopes. In only one instance did the project office directly mail questionnaires to a randomly selected list of students provided by the institution. In this case, Xavier University, Louisiana, felt it was more convenient for the project office to mail the questionnaires and self-addressed, stamped return envelopes than it was for the institution to do so.

In most cases, an official of the participating college or university wrote a covering letter to accompany the questionnaires. Such letters not only signaled institutional endorsement of the study, but were also thought to provide encouragement for students to complete the questionnaire. To further increase questionnaire responses, follow-up letters were sent to students by the site coordinator, the project director, or both.

A total of 1,827 questionnaires were distributed either by U.S. mail or by site coordinators to 820 college undergraduates in Louisiana and 1,007 in North Carolina. (Enrollment statistics and questionnaire distribution for the sample colleges and universities are shown in Table 4.1.)

Selection of Interview Sample

In addition to the sample of students, an interview sample of education officials was purposefully selected. This sample included: the admissions officer, registrar, or director of institutional research at each participating college or university; the director of research or testing programs within the state departments of education in Louisiana and North Carolina; the school superintendent or his or her representative and one to two principals of schools in or nearby the cities in which the sample colleges and universities were located. In Louisiana, these cities were New Orleans, Baton Rouge, and Shreveport; in North Carolina, Charlotte, Raleigh, Durham, and Greensboro. Senior high school principals were selected in North Carolina because of the mandated high school competency graduation test in that state. Elementary school principals were selected in Louisiana since the state's competency testing program was confined to the elementary grades.

The interview sample for each state totaled fifteen education officials distributed thusly:

- College or university director of admissions, registrar, or director of institutional research: Louisiana - 5; North Carolina - 6.
- State Department of Education, director of research or testing programs in each state - 2.
- School superintendents: Louisiana - 3; North Carolina - 4.
- High school principals in North Carolina - 4.
- Elementary school principals in Louisiana - 6.

TABLE 4.1

Profile of Participating Colleges and Universities and Student Questionnaire Distribution given Undergraduate Enrollment for Fall 1985*

College/University	Type	Undergraduate Enrollment - Fall 1985				Student Questionnaires Distributed
		Black	White	Other	Total	
Louisiana		N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)
Southern Univ.-Baton Rouge	4 yr. public, Hist. Black	7,590 (98.4)	73 (0.9)	53 (0.7)	7,716 (100)	230 (3)
Loyola Univ.**	4 yr. private, Hist. White	653 (14)	3,720 (79.5)	305 (6.5)	4,678 (100)	150 (3)
Xavier Univ.**	4 yr. private, Hist. Black	1,936 (94.7)	94 (4.6)	13 (0.6)	2,043 (100)	150 (7)
Delgado - City Park**	2 yr. public, Hist. White	2,419 (38.2)	3,085 (48.7)	833 (13.2)	6,337 (100)	150 (2)
Southern Univ.-Shreveport	2 yr. public, Hist. Black	722 (96.4)	23 (3.1)	4 (0.5)	749 (100)	140 (19)
North Carolina						
N.C. A & T Univ.	4 yr. public, Hist. Black	4,366 (88.1)	372 (7.5)	217 (4.3)	4,955 (100)	240 (5)
U.N.C.- Charlotte	4 yr. public, Hist. White	798 (8.5)	7,973 (85.2)	584 (6.2)	9,355 (100)	200 (2)
Duke Univ.	4 yr. private, Hist. White	272 (4.3)	5,500 (87.1)	537 (8.5)	6,309 (100)	150 (2)
Mars Hill	4 yr. private, Hist. White	66 (4.7)	1,331 (93.8)	22 (1.5)	1,419 (100)	140 (10)
St. Augustine's	4 yr. private, Hist. Black	1,701 (100)	-	-	1,701 (100)	175 (10)
Durham Tech.	2 yr. public, Hist. Black	1,495 (38.4)	2,232 (57.3)	107 (4.3)	3,894 (100)	102 (3)

* Non-resident aliens excluded. ** Enrollment data are for Fall, 1984.

Instruments

Student Questionnaire

Student data were collected through a self-developed questionnaire which was designed to obtain personal and educational background information that would not only enable us to develop a selective description of the respondents, but would also permit the analyses of these dimensions in relationship to student perceptions relative to competency test use. Relevant questions regarding high school background included type of school attended, type of curriculum studied, grades earned, class standing, and standardized and proficiency test taking requirements. College background questions included overall grade point average, undergraduate major gpa, reasons for selecting the college attending, lower to upper division advancement and graduation test requirements, employment and financial circumstances surrounding college attendance, and perceived quality of college education. Personal background questions pinpointed educational and career aspirations, citizenship status, marital status, sex, and ethnicity and parental occupational, educational, and economic background.

The questionnaire was reviewed for content validity by a panel of six expert judges and the Research Task Force of the Southern Education Foundation. It was pilot tested in Spring 1985 on a sample of 300 students attending two- and four-year colleges and universities in Northern California who were believed to be similar to those included in the survey. Following appropriate revisions, review, and another pilot testing, a final version was adopted for use in this study. The questionnaire is displayed in Appendix C.

Interview Protocol

Interview protocols were designed to elicit feelings about the efficacy of competency testing programs in each state, college entry competency test requirements, and college and high school collaborative efforts to improve student competency test performance and to strengthen high school curricula offerings. Before the final versions were agreed upon, protocols were reviewed by a panel of experts and tested on a sample of school and college educational administrators in Northern California. The protocols used are shown in Appendix D.

Data Collection Procedures

Questionnaire

At each of the colleges and universities agreeing to participate in the study, site coordinators were identified by the president of the institution to assist in the collection of student and institutional data. Questionnaires were distributed by site coordinators through U.S. or campus mail to students included in the sample. Completed questionnaires were placed in sealed envelopes and returned by students to the coordinators who then forwarded them to the project office. In one instance, questionnaires were mailed by the project office directly to a previously identified list of randomly selected students along with return, self-addressed, stamped envelopes. Questionnaires were unsigned and responses treated confidentially.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted with high school principals in North Carolina, elementary principals in Louisiana, school district superintendents or associate superintendents, state department of education administrators, and college and university admissions officers, registrars, or directors of institutional research. Because of limited resources, face-to-face and telephone interviews were conducted in Louisiana. Telephone interviews were conducted exclusively in North Carolina. All interviews were conducted by either of two project staff members.

Archival

Background data pertaining to the legislation undergirding competency testing programs in each state were examined to determine intent, scope, and implementation policies. In addition, reports concerning student performance on the competency tests, and general articles and papers regarding competency testing programs in Louisiana and North Carolina were systematically examined.

Data Analysis Procedures

Frequency distributions and percentages are generally used to characterize the data. Where appropriate, the chi-square test ($p < .05$) is used to test for statistical significance between groups, and Log-linear analysis is used to determine the relationship between independent and dependent variables used in the research questions.

Log-linear analysis provides simple and interpretable results for data analytic problems employing categorical structures. This analytical technique produces a set of coefficients which reflect the weighted averages of the frequencies in a contingency table. These coefficients lack direct interpretation, but may be converted into simple odds, which can express the relationship of two different conditions to one another (for example, black vs. white). The odds represent how many of one type of object there are for each one of a different type of object. For example, odds of 5.5 would mean that there are 5.5 of one type of condition or situation for every one of another. Log-linear coefficients converted into odds can be interpreted as the likelihood of occurrence given overall data points (Davis, 1976; Marascuilo and McSweeney, 1977; Fienberg, 1977; Haberman, 1978, 1979; Knoke and Burke, 1980).

Summary

College students and education officials in Louisiana and North Carolina constituted the sample for this study. A two-step intermediate sampling procedure was used to generate the student sample. In this procedure colleges and universities were first identified and selected by institutional type. Second, students attending the selected institutions were randomly selected for participation. The selection of institutions was based on type (two- and four-year, public and private, historically, predominately black or white), and geographical diversity within each state to ensure a cross section of students, particularly those who were black.

Perceptions regarding the use of school competency testing programs are to be derived from student questionnaires and interviews with education officials within each state. Data relative to students' personal and educational characteristics will be elicited also through the student questionnaire. Data pertaining to testing legislation, development, and policy will be obtained from existing records. Data analysis will include the use of basic descriptive statistics, Log-linear analysis, and content analysis of interview and archival records.

Chapter 5

GENERAL FINDINGS

Introduction

In this chapter data regarding questionnaire returns and the responding sample are presented. Descriptive data provided through the student questionnaire were analyzed using the chi square test at the $p < .05$ level of significance. The analysis compared full-time vs. part-time college enrollment status, upper division vs. lower division college class level, and black and white college males and females within each state's sample. Because many of the students responding to the questionnaire graduated from high schools in states other than Louisiana and North Carolina, the analysis further sought to determine whether there were statistically significant differences between graduates of high schools inside and outside the study states on the variables examined.

No statistically significant differences were found between full- and part-time enrollment status, or upper and lower division class level. These populations were thus combined. Further, since there were so few individuals classified as other, i.e., Asian, Hispanic or Latino, American Indian, or foreign, members of these groups were eliminated from the analysis. Statistical analyses are reported, therefore, for question response distributions between graduates of high schools inside and outside each state and for college students within each state by status group (black males, black females, white males, white females).

Responding Sample

Questionnaires were received from 67 percent of the Louisiana sample and 45 percent of the North Carolina sample. As displayed in Table 5.1, usable questionnaires totaled 536 for Louisiana (65 percent response rate) and 437 for North Carolina (43 percent response rate). The total responding sample graduated from high schools located in 174 cities within 36 states in this country. Only the following were not represented: Alaska, Arkansas, Delaware, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Washington, Utah, Wyoming, and the District of Columbia.

By institutional type, a clear majority of respondents were full-time students attending historically and predominantly black colleges and universities (see Tables 5.1 and 5.2). By ethnicity and gender, most were black females (see Tables 5.3 and 5.4). Irrespective of sex, black students in the responding sample appear nearly twice as often as do whites. Thus, the responding sample is biased in the direction of black students whose overall higher education enrollment representation in Louisiana, Fall 1985, was about 25 percent and in North Carolina, 19 percent (see Table 5.5).

By class level, freshmen and sophomores in both states (Louisiana, 61 percent; North Carolina, 54 percent) are more apparent in the sample than juniors, seniors, and those unclassified (Louisiana, 37 percent; North Carolina, 45 percent). These relationships hold even when two-year college students are removed (see Tables 5.6 and 5.7).

By high school type, the majority of the responding sample graduated from public schools (Louisiana, 85 percent; North Carolina, 77 percent). Only 5 percent of the Louisiana sample were graduates of parochial schools and 8 percent of private schools. In North Carolina, 18 percent graduated from parochial schools and 16 percent from those that were private (see Table 5.8). A slight majority of the North Carolina students graduated from high schools that were located outside that state (222 or 51 percent). In contrast, 72 percent (338) of the Louisiana sample graduated from Louisiana high schools (see Table 5.9).

TABLE 5.1
Questionnaires Distributed and Returned by Institution and Type

College/University	Institutional Type	Number Questionnaires Distributed	Number Questionnaires Returned	Number Usable Questionnaires	Percentage of Questionnaires Returned
Louisiana		N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)
Southern Univ.-Baton Rouge	4 yr. public	230 (100)	150 (65)	145 (63)	145 (27)
Loyola Univ.	Hist., pred. White 4 yr. private	150 (100)	121 (81)	121 (81)	121 (23)
Xavier Univ.	Hist., pred. Black 4 yr. private	150 (100)	68 (45)	62 (41)	62 (12)
Southern Univ.-Shreveport	Hist., pred. Black 4 yr. public	140 (100)	139 (99)	139 (99)	139 (26)
Delgado - City Park	Hist., pred. White 2 yr. public	150 (100)	75 (50)	69 (46)	69 (13)
State Totals		820 (100)	553 (67)	536 (65)	536 (100)
North Carolina					
N.C. A & T Univ.	Hist., pred. Black 4 yr. public	240 (100)	116 (48)	116 (48)	116 (27)
Duke Univ.	Hist., pred. White 4 yr. private	150 (100)	77 (51)	74 (45)	74 (17)
St. Augustine's College	Hist., pred. Black 4 yr. private	175 (100)	135 (77)	135 (77)	135 (31)
Mars Hill College	Hist., pred. White 4 yr. private	140 (100)	42 (30)	38 (27)	38 (9)
UNC - Charlotte	Hist., pred. White 4 yr. public regional	200 (100)	55 (28)	49 (25)	49 (11)
Durham Tech. Inst.	Hist. pred. White 2 yr. public	102 (100)	32 (31)	25 (25)	25 (6)
State Totals		1007 (100)	457 (45)	437 (43)	437 (100)

* Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

TABLE 5.2

Distribution of Responding Sample by Full-Time or Part-Time Enrollment Status Within States

State	Full-Time Enrollment	Part-Time Enrollment	Not Reported	Totals
Louisiana	402 (75%)	100 (19%)	34 (6%)	536 (100%)
North Carolina	397 (91%)	22 (5%)	18 (4%)	437 (100%)

TABLE 5.3

Distribution of Responding Sample by Ethnicity and Sex for Each Institution in the Study

	Ethnicity				Gender			
College/Univ.	Black	White	Other	Not Stated	Male	Female	Missing	Totals
North Carolina	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)
Duke	16 (21.6)	57 (77)	1 (1.4)	-	38 (51.4)	36 (48.6)	-	74 (17)
N.C. A & T	100 (86.2)	10 (8.6)	1 (.9)	5 (4.3)	56 (48.3)	58 (50)	2 (1.7)	116 (27)
St. Augustine's	125 (92.6)	1 (.7)	2 (1.4)	7 (5.2)	63 (46.7)	66 (48.9)	6 (4.4)	135 (31)
UNC - Charlotte	19 (38.8)	28 (57.1)	-	2 (4.1)	20 (40.8)	28 (57.1)	1 (2.0)	49 (11)
Mars Hill	8 (21.1)	29 (76.3)	-	1 (2.6)	7 (18.4)	31 (81.6)	-	38 (9)
Durham Tech	9 (36)	15 (60)	-	1 (4)	11 (44)	14 (56)	-	25 (6)
STATE TOTALS	277 (63)	140 (32)	4 (1)	16 (4)	195 (45)	233 (53)	9 (2)	437 (100)
Louisiana								
Loyola - N.O.	25 (20.7)	68 (56.2)	6 (4.9)	22 (18.2)	31 (25.6)	69 (57)	21 (17.4)	121 (23)
Xavier - N.O.	54	-	-	8	14	34	14	62 (12)
Southern U.-B.R.	134 (92.4)	1 (.7)	2 (1.4)	8 (6)	46 (31.7)	92 (63.4)	7 (4.8)	145 (27)
Southern U.-Shreve.	134 (96.4)	-	-	5 (3.6)	43 (30.9)	90 (64.7)	6 (4.3)	139 (26)
Delgado - N.O.	19 (27.5)	42 (60.9)	5 (7.1)	3 (4.3)	36 (52.2)	33 (47.8)	-	69 (13)
STATE TOTALS	366 (68)	111 (21)	12 (2)	46 (9)	170 (32)	318 (59)	48 (9)	536 (100)

TABLE 5.4

Responding Sample Distribution for Sex Within Ethnicity by State

	Black			White			Other			Combined			Missing	
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	N/R	Total
Louisiana														
N	118	248	366	46	65	111	6	5	11	170	318	488	48	536
(%)	(22)	(46)	(68)	(9)	(12)	(21)	(1)	(0.9)	(2)	(32)	(59)	(91)	(9)	(100)
North Carolina														
N	128	150	278	62	78	140	4	-	4	194	228	422	15	437
(%)	(29)	(34)	(64)	(14)	(18)	(32)	(0.9)		(0.9)	(44)	(52)	(97)	(3)	(100)
TOTALS	246	398	644	108	143	251	10	5	15	369	546	910	63	973
	(25.3)	(40.1)	(66.2)	(11.1)	(14.7)	(25.8)	(1.0)	(0.5)	(1.5)	(37.4)	(56.1)	(93.5)	(6.5)	(100)

TABLE 5.5

Fall 1985 Undergraduate Public and Private Enrollment by Ethnic Group for Institutional Type Within Louisiana and North Carolina Excluding Non-Resident Aliens

Ethnic Group Within State	4 yr. public N (%)	4 yr. private N (%) (Fall 1984)*	2 yr. public Comm. Coll./ Tech. Inst. N (%)	2 yr. private Comm. Coll./ Tech. Inst. N (%)	Totals public 2 & 4 yr. Coll. N (%)	Totals private 2 & 4 yr. Coll. N (%)	Combined public/priv. 2 & 4 yr. Coll. N (%)
Louisiana							
Black	28,175 (25)	4,673 (23)	3,847 (31.6)	-	32,022 (25.6)	4,673 (23)	36,695 (25)
White, Non-Hispanic	81,216 (72)	14,917 (73)	7,646 (62.8)	-	88,862 (71.1)	14,917 (73)	103,779 (71)
Other	3,487 (3.1)	901 (4)	689 (5.7)	-	4,176 (3.3)	901 (4)	5,077 (3)
TOTALS	112,878 (100)	20,491 (100)	12,182 (100)	-	125,060 (100)	20,491 (100)	145,551 (100)
North Carolina							
Black	20,753 (20)	8,491 (19.5)	23,048 (17.9)	441 (10.4)	43,801 (19)	8,932 (19)	52,733 (19)
White	79,035 (76)	33,246 (76.5)	102,554 (79.5)	3,604 (85.1)	181,589 (78)	36,850 (77)	218,439 (78)
Other	3,799 (4)	1,717 (4.9)	3,316 (2.6)	188 (4.5)	7,115 (3)	1,905 (4)	9,020 (3)
TOTALS	103,587 (100)	43,454 (100)	128,918 (100)	4,233 (100)	232,505 (100)	47,687 (100)	280,192 (100)

Source: Board of Regents, State of Louisiana, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.
The University of North Carolina, General Administration, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

* Racial breakdowns for private colleges and universities were not available for 1985 from the State of Louisiana.

TABLE 5.6

Responding Sample Enrollment by Class Level

College/Univ.	1st yr. FRESH	2nd yr. SOPH	3rd yr. JR	4th yr. SR	Unclassified	Missing	Total
North Carolina	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)
Duke	1 (1.4)	8 (10.8)	22 (29.7)	43 (58.1)	-	-	74 (37)
N.C. A & T	44 (37.9)	30 (25.9)	22 (19.0)	19 (16.4)	1 (.9)	-	116 (48)
St. Augustine's	4 (3.0)	86 (63.7)	25 (18.5)	18 (13.3)	-	2 (1.5)	135 (77)
UNC-Charlotte	10 (20.4)	16 (32.7)	7 (14.3)	12 (24.3)	3 (6.1)	1 (2.0)	49 (33)
Mars Hill	12 (31.6)	12 (31.6)	6 (15.8)	8 (21.1)	-	-	38 (22)
Durham Tech (2 yr.)	5 (20)	7 (28)	3 (12)	2 (8)	5 (20)	3 (12)	25 (25)
STATE TOTALS	76 (17)	159 (36)	85 (19)	102 (23)	9 (2)	6 (1)	437 (100)
Louisiana							
Loyola	42 (34.7)	18 (14.9)	24 (19.8)	34 (28.1)	-	3 (2.5)	121 (81)
Xavier	13 (21)	18 (29)	13 (21)	16 (25.8)	2 (3.2)	-	62 (36)
Southern U.-B.R.	29 (20)	35 (24.1)	37 (25.5)	27 (18.7)	11 (7.6)	6	145 (63)
Southern U.-Shreve (2 yr.)	69 (49.6)	69 (49.6)	-	-	-	1 (.7)	139 (99)
Delgado (2 yr.)	17 (24.6)	17 (24.6)	3 (4.3)	3 (4.3)	26 (37.7)	3 (4.3)	69 (38)
STATE TOTALS	170 (32)	157 (29)	77 (14)	80 (15)	39 (7)	13 (2)	536 (100)
SAMPLE TOTALS	246 (25)	316 (32)	162 (17)	182 (19)	48 (5)	19 (2)	973 (100)

TABLE 5.7

College Enrollment for Combined Class Levels Within Each State

Class Level	Louisiana		North Carolina		TOTALS	
	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)
Freshmen & Sophomores	327	(61)	235	(54)	562	(58)
Juniors, Seniors, & Unclassified	196	(37)	196	(45)	392	(40)
Missing	13	(2)	6	(1)	19	(2)
TOTALS	536	(100)	437	(100)	973	(100)

TABLE 5.8

Respondents by Type of High School from Which Graduated

College/Univ.	Number of Respondents	High School Type Public	 Parochial	 Private	Missing (NA)
North Carolina	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)
Duke	74 (17)	50 (67.6)	2 (2.7)	22 (29.7)	-
N.C. A & T	116 (27)	105 (90.5)	3 (2.6)	3 (2.6)	5 (4.3)
St. Augustine's	135 (31)	115 (85.2)	13 (9.6)	4 (3.0)	3 (2.2)
UNC-Charlotte	49 (11)	45 (91.8)	3 (6.1)	1 (2.0)	-
Mars Hill	38 (9)	36 (94.7)	1 (2.6)	1 (2.6)	-
Durham Tech	25 (6)	22 (88.0)	1 (4.0)	2 (8.0)	-
STATE TOTALS	437 (100)	373 (85)	23 (5)	33 (8)	8 (2)
Louisiana					
Loyola U.- N.O.	121 (23)	46 (38.0)	62 (51.2)	8 (6.6)	5 (4.1)
Xavier U.- N.O.	62 (12)	34 (54.8)	23 (37.1)	4 (6.5)	1 (1.6)
Southern U.- B.R.	145 (27)	131 (90.3)	8 (5.5)	2 (1.4)	4 (2.8)
Southern U.-Shreveport	139 (26)	137 (98.6)	-	1 (.7)	1 (.7)
Delgado - N.O.	69 (13)	64 (92.8)	4 (5.8)	1 (1.4)	-
STATE TOTALS	536 (100)	412 (77)	97 (18)	16 (3)	11 (2)
SAMPLE TOTALS	973 (100)	785 (81)	120 (12)	49 (5)	19 (2)

TABLE 5.9

Distribution of Responding Sample by Location of High School from Which Graduated

State	Graduated from High School in State	Graduated from High School Outside State	Totals
Louisiana	388 (72%)	148 (28%)	536 (100%)
North Carolina	215 (49%)	222 (51%)	437 (100%)

Non-Respondents

Despite follow-up letters to subjects in the survey sample, many did not respond. Because of the geographical distance between the project office, which was located in Berkeley, California, and the Louisiana and North Carolina colleges and universities in which the students were enrolled, it was not feasible to arrange interviews to determine the similarity of nonrespondents and respondents. Several reasons, however, may account for the number of nonrespondents. Included among them may have been the length of the questionnaire, the timing of its distribution, and, according to site coordinators, the fact that students had been requested to complete several other questionnaires prior to this survey and thus were simply not interested in completing another one. These reasons are, of course, speculative; our inability to interact with the nonrespondents prevents establishing definitive reasons for their failure to complete the questionnaire.

Given the Louisiana and North Carolina college and university enrollment patterns which show that black females make up a larger portion of the black student population than do males, it is likely that more of the black nonrespondents were black females. Overall, however, the most glaring segment of nonrespondents were white students who significantly outnumber black students in the higher education population in both states (see Table 5.5).

The majority of the respondents in Louisiana are split between each of two historically, predominantly black two- and four-year universities or colleges and a historically, predominantly white four-year private university. The majority of respondents in North Carolina are divided between the historically, predominantly black four-year public and private universities included in the sample.

Given that a fundamental focus of this study is the perceptions of black students regarding the use of competency tests and the effects these tests may have had on their educational and career aspirations, the predominance of black students in the sample is desirable. Nevertheless, because of the response rate and distribution pattern of the respondents, the questionnaire findings should be confined to the responding sample.

Personal Characteristics of Respondents

Age

Regardless of sex within ethnicity, the majority of respondents graduating from Louisiana high schools, 269 (77 percent), were between 18 and 22 years of age. This is also true for those respondents who graduated from high schools located outside Louisiana, with 56 (47 percent) of them in this age bracket. Although not statistically significant, more white male and female graduates of high schools outside Louisiana tended to be older than black males and females.

For the North Carolina students, significant differences were also not found between students graduating from high schools inside and outside that state, or between status groups within these sub-samples. The majority of North Carolina students (78.2 percent or the 413 students who responded to this question) were between 18 and 22 years of age and not unlike the Louisiana students in this respect. Interestingly, there was a larger percentage of black female (83.8 percent) and white female students (83.3 percent) in this age bracket than black male (68.8 percent) and white male students (77.3 percent). The ages of students in both states ranged from 17 to 55 years old.

Citizenship Status

The overwhelming majority of respondents graduating from high schools within Louisiana (343 or 99 percent) or from outside the state (107 or 92 percent) were U.S. citizens. In the North Carolina sample, nearly all students reported that they were U.S. citizens (94.1%). Students who graduated from high schools inside North Carolina, however, represented a larger proportion of U.S. citizens than did students graduating from high schools outside North Carolina.

Marital Status

The majority of Louisiana respondents have never been married. Only nine percent (19) of the black females graduating from Louisiana high schools and 42 percent (13) of the white males who were graduates of high schools outside Louisiana reported they were married. The majority of North Carolina students (91.6 percent of 418 students) also have never been married. A slightly larger percentage of black male and female students (93.0 percent and 94.0 percent respectively) report never being married than white male and female students (87.1 percent and 88.5 percent). These differences, however, are not beyond those that could be expected by chance.

Home Community

Generally, most graduates from high schools outside Louisiana grew up in a large city (44 or 36 percent) while those who graduated from Louisiana high schools grew up in a medium-sized city (125 or 35 percent). More black than white students from Louisiana high schools grew up on a farm, in a rural area, in a town, or in a small city. For graduates of high schools outside Louisiana, the distribution across area type is reversed: white students in this category are more likely to have grown up on a farm, in a rural area, in a town, or in a small city. Nonetheless, these differences are not statistically significant.

Among North Carolina college students, 25.8 percent (109) grew up in a medium-sized city and 19 percent (80) in a large city. Most of them grew up in either a small city, a town, in a rural area, or on a farm (56 percent or 238).

Employment Status of Parents and Spouses

Irrespective of ethnicity or sex, most graduates of high schools in Louisiana report that their fathers were employed full-time (267 or 92 percent) by someone other than themselves (208 or 59 percent). A significant number of mothers of these students also worked full-time (222 or 83 percent) with the majority of them (226 or 65 percent) not being self-employed. Only 6 percent (20) were self-employed. A greater proportion of the mothers of black students worked full-time than mothers of white students. Conversely, a greater proportion of white mothers than black worked part time. These differences, however, do not exceed those that may have occurred by chance.

For students graduating from high schools outside Louisiana, similar patterns hold. A clear majority of the fathers of these students (101 or 94 percent) and mothers (73 or 80 percent) are employed full-time. Descriptively, considerably more black mothers were employed by someone else (208 or 70 percent) than were white mothers (18 or 37 percent).

Over half of the 411 North Carolina students who answered this question reported that their fathers (60 percent) and mothers (66 percent) were "employed by someone else." More fathers of white than black male and female students were "self-employed" while more fathers of black than white males were "retired." Nearly all of the fathers of North Carolina college students (93 percent or 342) and mothers (82 percent or 316) were employed full time. It is interesting to note that a substantially larger percentage of the mothers of white male and female students did not work (42 percent and 44 percent respectively) than did the mothers of black male (7 percent) and female (14 percent) students.

The majority of the employed spouses of married students who graduated either from high schools inside or outside Louisiana (N = 69) were employed by someone other than themselves (46 or 72 percent). Less than 14 percent (9) of them were self-employed. Most spouses (69 percent) of North Carolina students responding to this question were likewise employed by someone else. Among those responding, the differences between inside and outside the state high school graduation or between status groups were not statistically significant.

Occupations of Parents*

The majority of 266 fathers of black students graduating from high schools within Louisiana held occupations that can be classified as laborers, operatives, or craftsmen (see Table 5.11). Twenty-one percent (56) were laborers, 13 percent (35) were operatives, and 14 percent (37) were craftsmen. By contrast, the majority of the 47 fathers of white graduates of Louisiana's high schools were employed as managers or professionals. Twenty-one percent (10) of them were employed as managers and administrators, and 26 percent (12) as professionals (see Table 5.11).

Fathers of black student graduates of high schools outside Louisiana display a slightly different occupational pattern (see Table 5.12). Eighteen percent (9) of the total 51 have professional occupations and 14 percent (7) have managerial or administrative positions. Fathers of white students graduating from high schools outside Louisiana (59) display the same pattern as those of Louisiana high school graduates. They are generally reported to have managerial/administrative (10 or 17 percent) and professional (12 or 20 percent) occupations such as accountant, clergyman, dentist, physician, and the like (see Table 5.12). Father's occupations for black and white high school graduates outside Louisiana are not statistically significantly different, however.

The occupations held by mothers, particularly black mothers, are quite interesting. Overwhelmingly, of the 236 mothers of black graduates of Louisiana high schools, 65 (28 percent) of them are employed in service occupations. Thirty-three (14 percent) of them are elementary or secondary school teachers, 19 (8 percent) hold professional positions, 17 (7

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* See Table 5.10 for a listing of the occupations referred to in this section. This listing is also included in the student questionnaire which is displayed in Appendix C.

TABLE 5.10

Categories Used to Describe Parental Occupations

CLERICAL, such as bank teller, bookkeeper, secretary, typist, mail carrier, ticket agent

CRAFTSMAN, such as baker, automobile mechanic, machinist, painter, plumber, telephone installer, carpenter

FARMER, FARM MANAGER

LABORER, such as construction worker, car washer, sanitary worker, farm laborer

MANAGER, ADMINISTRATOR, such as sales manager, office manager, school administrator, buyer, restaurant manager, government official

MILITARY, such as career officer, enlisted man or woman in the Armed Forces

OPERATIVE, such as meat cutter, assembler, machine operator, welder, taxicab, bus, or truck driver

PROFESSIONAL, such as accountant, artist, registered nurse, engineer, librarian

PROFESSIONAL, such as clergyman, dentist, physician, lawyer, scientist, college teacher

PROPRIETOR OR OWNER, such as owner of a small business, contractor, restaurant owner

PROTECTIVE SERVICE, such as detective, police officer or guard, sheriff, fire fighter

SALES, such as salesperson, advertising or insurance agent, real estate broker

SCHOOL TEACHER, such as elementary or secondary

SERVICE, such as barber, beautician, practical nurse, private household worker, janitor, waiter

TECHNICAL, such as draftsman, medical or dental technician, computer programmer

TABLE 5.11

Father's Occupation for Graduates of High Schools in Louisiana

	Black Male	Black Female	White Male	White Female	Row Total
Did not live with father	11 14.5%	24 12.6%		4 12.5%	39 12.5%
Clerical	2 2.6%	3 1.6%			5 1.6%
Craftsman	10 13.2%	27 14.2%		3 9.4%	40 12.8%
Farmer, Farm Manager	1 1.3%	5 2.6%			6 1.9%
Laborer	11 14.5%	45 23.7%			56 17.9%
Manager/ Administrator	6 7.9%	3 1.6%	5 33.3%	5 15.6%	19 6.1%
Military	7 9.2%	7 3.7%	1 6.7%	3 9.4%	18 5.8%
Operative	8 10.5%	27 14.2%			35 11.2%
Professional (Accountant, Artist, etc.)	1 1.3%		2 13.3%	4 12.5%	7 2.2%
Professional (Clergyman, Dentist, Physician, etc.)	2 2.6%	5 2.6%	1 6.7%	5 15.6%	13 4.2%
Proprietor or Owner	1 1.3%	9 4.7%	3 20.0%	3 9.4%	16 5.1%
Protective Service		6 3.2%			6 1.9%
Sales		1 .5%	1 6.7%	3 9.4%	5 1.6%
School Teacher	2 2.6%	4 2.1%	1 6.7%		7 2.2%

TABLE 5.11 cont'd.

	Black Male	Black Female	White Male	White Female	Row Total
Service	2 2.6%	11 5.8%			13 4.2%
Technical	1 1.3%	2 1.1%	1 6.7%	1 3.1%	5 1.6%
Don't know	11 14.5%	11 5.8%		1 3.1%	23 7.3%
Column Total	76 24.3%	190 60.7%	15 4.8%	32 10.2%	313 100%

$X^2 = 147.70$, df = 48, n.s.

TABLE 5.12

Father's Occupation for Graduates of High Schools Outside Louisiana

	Black Male	Black Female	White Male	White Female	Row Total
Did Not Live With Father	2 8.7%	4 14.3%	3 9.7%	2 7.1%	11 10.0%
Craftsman	3 13.0%	1 3.6%	3 9.7%	2 7.1%	9 8.2%
Farmer, Farm Manager	1 4.3%	1 3.6%	1 3.2%	1 3.6%	4 3.6%
Laborer	2 8.7%	3 10.7%	1 3.2%	1 3.6%	7 6.4%
Manager/ Administrator	5 21.7%	2 7.1%	6 19.4%	4 14.3%	17 5.5%
Military	1 4.3%		1 3.2%	4 14.3%	6 5.5%
Operative	3 13.0%	4 14.3%	3 9.7%	2 7.1%	12 10.9%
Professional (Accountant, Artist, etc.)			3 9.7%	4 14.3%	7 6.4%
Professional (Clergyman, Dentist, Physician)	3 13.0%	6 21.4%	3 9.7%	2 7.1%	14 12.7%
Proprietor or Owner		1 3.6%	2 6.5%	4 14.3%	7 6.4%
Protective Service	1 4.3%				1 .9%
Sales		1 3.6%	4 12.9%		5 4.5%
School Teacher	1 4.3%	2 7.1%			3 2.7%

TABLE 5.12 cont'd.

	Black Male	Black Female	White Male	White Female	Row Total
Service		1 3.6%			1 .9%
Technical			1 3.2%	1 3.6%	2 1.8%
Don't Know	1 4.3%	2 7.1%		1 3.6%	4 3.6%
Column Total	23 20.9%	28 25.5%	31 28.2%	28 25.5%	110 100%

$X^2 = 48.24702$, D.F. = 45, n.s.

percent) are operatives, and 16 (7 percent) hold clerical positions. Most of the employed mothers of Louisiana white high school graduates (33) hold clerical positions (6 or 17 percent). A few are elementary or secondary school teachers (4 or 12 percent) or are employed in managerial or administrative positions (4 or 12 percent). Differences in mother's occupation by student's ethnic status group display no statistical significance (see Table 5.13).

The occupational pattern of mothers of graduates of high schools outside Louisiana stands in sharp contrast to that of graduates of Louisiana high schools (see Table 5.14). The majority of mothers of black graduates from high schools outside Louisiana reportedly held professional occupations such as clergyman, dentist, physician, lawyer, etc. (12 or 23 percent), or were school teachers (11 or 21 percent). The majority of mothers of white graduates of high schools outside Louisiana were employed in occupations classified as clerical (11 or 26 percent) or service (10 or 23 percent).

In the North Carolina sample, statistically significant differences are to be noted for occupations of mothers between black and white students graduating from high schools within that state, but not for fathers. As shown in Table 5.15, fathers of black male students (N = 103) were employed as laborers (13 percent) and of black female students as operatives (13 percent). The fathers of white male students (N = 57) were either employed as professionals (32 percent) or managers/administrators (18 percent). The fathers of white female students (N = 72) also were employed either as managers/administrators (22 percent) or professionals (21 percent).

The employment pattern of mothers (see Table 5.16) differed significantly by status group ($X^2 = 68.46$, d.f = 45, $p < 0.01$). Mothers of both black male (N = 103) and black female (N = 122) students were most frequently employed as school teachers (19 and 13 percent respectively) or in service related jobs (16 and 18 percent respectively). Mothers of white male students (N = 41) were most frequently employed in clerical (27 percent) or service related jobs (17 percent). Among the mothers of white female students (N = 55),

TABLE 5.13

Mother's Occupation for Graduates of High Schools in Louisiana

	Black Male	Black Female	White Male	White Female	Row Total
Did Not Live With Mother	7 10.0%	11 6.6%		3 13.0%	21 7.8%
Clerical	5 7.1%	11 6.6%	2 20.0%	4 17.4%	22 8.2%
Craftsman	1 1.4%	4 2.4%		1 4.3%	6 2.2%
Laborer	3 4.3%	8 4.8%			1 4.1%
Manager/ Administrator	4 5.7%	4 2.4%	1 10.0%	3 13.0%	12 4.5%
Operative	3 4.3%	14 8.4%			17 6.3%
Professional (Accountant, Artist, etc.)	4 5.7%	15 9.0%	1 10.0%		20 7.4%
Professional (Clergyman, Dentist, Physician, etc.)	2 2.9%	2 1.2%	1 10.0%	1 4.3%	6 2.2%
Proprietor or Owner		1 .6%	1 10.0%	2 8.7%	4 1.5%
Protective Service		1 .6%			1 .4%
Sales	2 2.9%	4 2.4%		2 8.7%	8 3.0%
School Teacher	9 12.9%	24 14.5%	1 10.0%	3 13.0%	37 13.8%

TABLE 5.13 cont'd.

	Black Male	Black Female	White Male	White Female	Row Total
Service (Barber, Beautician, etc.)	16 22.9%	49 29.5%	1 10.0%	1 4.3%	67 24.9%
Technical (Draftsman, Med/Dental Technician)	1 1.4%	2 1.2%			3 1.1%
Don't Know	13 18.6%	16 9.6%	2 20.0%	3 13.0%	34 12.6%
Column Total	70 26.0%	166 61.7%	10 3.7%	23 8.6%	269 100%

$X^2 = 55.21936$, D.F. = 42, n.s.

TABLE 5.14

Mother's Occupation for Graduates of High Schools Outside Louisiana

	Black Male	Black Female	White Male	White Female	Row Total
Did Not Live With Mother	1 4.2%	1 3.4%			2 2.1%
Clerical	4 16.7%	2 6.9%	4 17.4%	7 35.0%	17 17.7%
Craftsman	1 4.2%	1 3.4%	1 4.3%		3 3.1%
Farmer, Farm Manager	1 4.2%		1 4.3%		2 2.1%
Laborer			2 8.7%		2 2.1%
Manager/ Administrator	1 4.2%	2 6.9%		1 5.0%	4 4.2%
Operative	1 4.2%		1 4.3%	1 5.0%	3 3.1%
Professional (Clergyman, Dentist, Physician, etc.)	6 25.0%	6 20.7%	1 4.3%	2 10.0%	15 15.6%
Proprietor or Owner	1 4.2%				1 1.0%
Sales	1 4.2%	1 3.4%	2 8.7%	1 5.0%	5 5.2%
School Teacher	6 25.0%	5 17.2%	3 13.0%	1 5.0%	15 15.6%
Service (Barber, Beautician, etc.)		7 24.1%	5 21.7%	5 25.0%	17 17.7%

TABLE 5.14 cont'd.

	Black Male	Black Female	White Male	White Female	Row Total
Technical		1 3.4%	1 4.3%		2 2.1%
Don't Know	1 4.2%	3 10.3%	2 8.7%	2 10.0%	8 8.3%
Column Total	24 25.0%	29 30.2%	23 24.0%	20 20.8%	96 100%

$X^2 = 38.05793$, D.F. = 39, n.s.

TABLE 5.15

Father's Occupation for Graduates of High Schools in North Carolina

	Black Male	Black Female	White Male	White Female	Row Total
Did Not Live With Father	16 15.5%	22 18.2%	2 3.5%		40 11.3%
Clerical	3 2.9%	1 .8%	3 5.3%	1 1.4%	8 2.3%
Craftsman	9 8.7%	9 7.4%	4 7.0%	8 11.1%	30 8.5%
Farmer, Farm Manager	1 1.0%	6 5.0%	1 1.8%	1 1.4%	9 2.5%
Laborer	13 12.6%	13 10.7%	1 1.8%	1 1.4%	28 7.9%
Manager/ Administrator	12 11.7%	6 5.0%	10 17.5%	16 22.2%	44 12.5%
Military	9 8.7%	9 7.4%	2 3.5%	2 2.8%	22 6.2%
Operative	10 9.7%	16 13.2%	2 3.5%	3 4.2%	31 8.8%
Professional (Accountant, Artist, etc.)	2 1.9%	4 3.3%	3 5.3%	7 9.7%	16 4.5%
Professional (Clergyman, Dentist, Physician, etc.)	3 2.9%	5 4.1%	18 31.6%	15 20.8%	41 11.6%
Proprietor or Owner	4 3.9%	2 1.7%	4 7.0%	7 9.7%	17 4.8%
Protective Service	1 1.0%	5 4.1%		1 1.4%	7 2.0%
Sales	2 1.9%	1 .8%	2 3.5%	3 4.2%	8 2.3%
School Teacher	3 2.9%	4 3.3%		2 2.8%	9 2.5%

TABLE 5.15 cont'd.

	Black Male	Black Female	White Male	White Female	Row Total
Service	1 1.0%	3 2.5%		1 1.4%	5 1.4%
Technical	1 1.0%	5 4.1%	5 8.8%	4 5.6%	15 4.2%
Don't Know	13 12.6%	10 8.3%			23 6.5%
Column Total	103 29.2%	121 34.3%	57 16.1%	72 20.4%	353 100%

X^2 = 141.50783, D.F. = 48, n.s.

TABLE 5.16

Mother's Occupation for Graduates of High Schools in North Carolina

	Black Male	Black Female	White Male	White Female	Row Total
Did Not Live With Mother	8 7.8%	5 4.1%			13 4.0%
Clerical	13 12.6%	14 11.5%	11 26.8%	11 20.0%	49 15.3%
Craftsman	2 1.9%	2 1.6%		2 3.6%	6 1.9%
Farmer, Farm Manager	1 1.0%	3 2.5%			4 1.2%
Laborer	5 4.9%	2 1.6%	1 2.4%	1 1.8%	9 2.8%
Manager/ Administrator	4 3.9%	8 6.6%	5 12.2%	6 10.9%	23 7.2%
Operative	7 6.8%	12 9.8%	2 4.9%	4 7.3%	25 7.8%
Professional (Accountant, Artist, etc.)	11 10.7%	15 12.3%	1 2.4%	4 7.3%	31 9.7%
Professional (Clergyman, Dentist, Physician, etc.)	4 3.9%	2 1.6%	2 4.9%	1 1.8%	9 1.2%
Proprietor or Owner	1 1.0%	1 .8%	1 2.4%	1 1.8%	4 1.2%
Protective Service	1 1.0%				1 .3%
Sales	2 1.9%	2 1.6%	1 2.4%	9 16.4%	14 4.4%
School Teacher	20 19.4%	16 13.1%	5 12.2%	9 16.4%	50 15.6%

TABLE 5.16 cont'd.

	Black Male	Black Female	White Male	White Female	Row Total
Service	16 15.5%	22 18.0%	7 17.1%	4 7.3%	49 15.3%
Technical		4 3.3%		1 1.8%	5 1.6%
Don't Know	8 7.8%	14 11.5%	5 12.2%	2 3.6%	29 9.0%
Column Total	103 32.1%	122 38.0%	41 12.8%	55 17.1%	321 100%

$X^2 = 68.46$, D.F. = 45, $p < 0.01$

20 percent were employed in clerical jobs, 16 percent in sales, and 16 percent in teaching positions.

Education Level of Parents and Spouses

Overall, fathers of black Louisiana high school graduates either graduated from high school or have less than a high school education. Seventy-one (36 percent) of the total 195 fathers of black females and 24 (29 percent) of the 83 fathers of black males included in the sampled graduates of Louisiana high schools completed education at less than a high school graduation level. For those fathers graduating from high school, the distribution is as follows: fathers of black females, 46 (24 percent); black males, 18 (22 percent). Few fathers of black graduates of Louisiana high schools are college graduates; even fewer hold an advanced professional degree.

Turning to the educational background of mothers of Louisiana's black high school graduates, we find that the number of them having less than a high school diploma parallels that of fathers: 49 (24 percent) for black females, 18 (21 percent) for black males. More mothers, however, graduated from high school, completed college, and obtained a Master's degree than did fathers. Seventy-one (35 percent) of the mothers of black females and 25 (29 percent) of black males graduated from high school. In addition, black mothers completing college number 11 (5 percent) for females and 9 (11 percent) for males. Similarly, 11 (5 percent) of the mothers of females and 7 (8 percent) of males obtained a Master's degree or its equivalent. Moreover, 4 (2 percent) of the black female mothers earned the Ph.D., M.D., or other advanced professional degree.

For black students graduating from high schools outside Louisiana the same pattern of parental education level is manifested. Most of the fathers fall into two educational levels: less than high school graduation or high school graduate. Likewise, mothers are more likely to have graduated from high school, completed college, and earned a Master's degree or its equivalent.

Few parents of white students graduating from Louisiana high schools did not themselves graduate from high school. Many of them are likely to have completed college. Of the 33 fathers of white females, 10 (30 percent) graduated from high school, 9 (27 percent) from college, 3 (9 percent) obtained the Master's or equivalent degree, and 2 (6 percent) the Ph.D., M.D., or other advanced professional degree. The 15 fathers of white males have the following distribution: 5 (33 percent) high school graduate; 4 (27 percent) college graduate; 1 (7 percent) Master's degree or its equivalent; and 1 (7 percent) the Ph.D., M.D., or other advanced professional degree. White students who graduated from high schools outside Louisiana display a pattern of parental education similar to that of those who graduated from Louisiana high schools. Most of the 60 fathers in this population are high school (17 percent) and college (23 percent) graduates with several possessing advanced degrees (13 percent). Twelve (20 percent) of them have less than a high school diploma and 12 (20 percent) have less than a four-year college degree but more than a high school diploma.

Mothers of white students graduating from schools outside Louisiana show the following educational pattern: 9 (16 percent) have less than a high school diploma; 14 (24 percent) graduated from high school; 10 (17 percent) graduated from college; 5 (9 percent) earned the Master's degree. Twenty (34 percent) pursued education beyond high school but did not graduate from a four-year college.

In North Carolina there is a marked difference, though not beyond the limits of chance at $p < .05$ level, between father's educational level according to group status which is no doubt influenced by the sample from Duke University, a high prestige university. Black male and female students most frequently had fathers who had either less than high school graduation (20 percent and 23 percent) or high school graduation only (23 percent and 23 percent). White male students most frequently had fathers who had obtained a four-year college degree (21 percent) or earned the doctoral degree (25 percent). White female students most frequently had fathers who had acquired either a Master's degree (17 percent) or doctorate (18 percent). Partially mirroring the finding noted for fathers, North Carolina college students most frequently had mothers who had graduated from high school (27 percent) or from a four-year college (16 percent).

The education levels of spouses of married students is fairly evenly divided among educational levels. For the 23 married black females graduating from high schools in Louisiana, 5 (22 percent) of their spouses had some high school, 3 (13 percent) finished high school, 3 (13 percent) completed less than 2 years of vocational, trade, or business school after high school, 5 (22 percent) more than 2 years, 3 (13 percent) completed 2 or more years of college, including the two-year degree, 3 (13 percent) finished college, and 1 (4 percent) earned the Master's degree or its equivalent.

Spouses of white males (12) graduating from high schools outside Louisiana completed the following educational levels: 4 (33 percent) finished high school, 1 (8 percent) less than 2 years of college, 3 (25 percent) 2 years or more of college including the two-year degree, 1 (8 percent) finished college, and 3 (25 percent) the Master's degree or equivalent. The majority of white females in this category (6 or 55 percent) finished college, 1 (9 percent) completed the Master's degree or its equivalent, 3 (27 percent) completed less than two years of college, and 1 (9 percent) only finished high school. No consistent findings regarding North Carolina spouses' educational level could be discerned among the few (28) respondents to this question.

Family Economic Conditions

Students were asked to describe their family's economic condition during the time they were growing up by responding to the following statements:

1. We were well off, could afford almost anything we wanted.
2. We had all that we needed and some extra.
3. We didn't have much extra, but we had what we really needed.
4. There were times when we couldn't afford things we really needed.

5. Things were always tough financially.

The majority of Louisiana high school graduates report that their families could "afford all they really needed and some extras." Forty-one (49 percent) of the black males, 85 (41 percent) of the black females, 12 (36 percent) of the white females, and 5 (33 percent) of the white males indicate this condition. Agreeing that their families "didn't have much extra, but had what it really needed" were 35 percent (120 of the 341) of the total sample. By status group, this category includes 27 (32 percent) black males, 79 (38 percent) black females, 8 (24 percent) white females, and 6 (40 percent) white males.

Not surprisingly, the majority of students reporting that there were "times when their families couldn't afford things really needed" or that "things were always tough financially" were black males (10 or 12 percent) and black females (27 or 13 percent). Only 3 (9 percent) of the white female students were in these categories. At the other extreme, 18 (9 percent) black females, 6 (7 percent) black males, 10 (30 percent) white females, and 4 (27 percent) white males report that their families were "well off and could afford almost anything wanted."

Students graduating from high schools outside Louisiana display the same general pattern as noted above. The majority of students in this sample of 118 came from families which, economically, had "all that was needed plus some extras" (64 or 54 percent) and "all that was really needed but without much extra" (32 or 27 percent). Those that considered their families to be "well off, affording anything they wanted" numbered 10 (9 percent), and 12 (10 percent) were from families that "at times couldn't afford things really needed" or that found that "things were always tough financially." In these latter categories, white males (6 or 20 percent) and white females (3 or 10 percent) are more prevalent than black students who are represented only by black males (3 or 12 percent). These differences, however, are not statistically significant.

Students who graduated from high schools inside and outside North Carolina differ significantly ($X^2 = 17.92$, $df = 4$, $p < .001$). Students graduating from high schools outside North Carolina are more likely to assign themselves to the category of being well off than those within the state. By status group within the North Carolina sample, black male (67 percent) and female (81 percent) students describe their family's economic condition as either "we had all that we needed and some extra" or "we didn't have much extra, but we had what we really needed." White male (79 percent) and female (78 percent) students describe their family's economic condition as either "we were well off, could afford almost anything we wanted" or "we had all that we needed and some extra." More black males (17 percent) and females (11 percent) also report that "there were times when we couldn't afford things we really needed" and that "things were always tough financially" (6 percent and 2 percent respectively) than their white counterparts. Overall, the differences between status groups are not statistically significant.

Summary

In most personal characteristics dimensions, students in the sample are quite similar. Most of them are between the ages of 18 and 22, are U.S. citizens, and have never been married. North Carolina students and black students graduating from high schools in Louisiana display a propensity to have grown up in a small city, a town, in a rural area, or on a farm. By contrast, white students graduating from high schools outside Louisiana are more likely to have grown up in these communities.

The majority of students' parents work full time and generally are not self-employed. On average, black parents are employed in fewer managerial, administrative, and technical occupations than are white parents. Generally, black parents also have completed less education than white parents. Interestingly, the education level of black mothers exceeds that of black fathers. Economically, most students report that while growing up they had all that was needed and some extra. It is the case, however, that more black families fall at the lower end of the economic scale than do white parents.

Chapter 6

STUDENT TESTING REQUIREMENTS AND STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS REGARDING COMPETENCY TESTS

Introduction

In this chapter the extent to which students report taking tests considered for entry decisions at many colleges -- SAT, College Board, PSAT, ACT, Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) -- is discussed for in-state and out-of-state high school graduates by ethnic status group. In addition, the numbers of students who report taking a high school graduation competency test are reported by ethnic status group within the two states included in the study. Finally, competency test perceptions of Louisiana and North Carolina college students who have taken a high school competency test or who are expected to take a college competency examination are described.

Standardized Test Taking Requirements

Surprisingly, large numbers of Louisiana college students graduating from high schools in and out of that state report not taking any of the above indicated standardized tests used for college entry decisions during their high school years. For example, at the 9th grade level, of the 486 responses, 86 percent (420) did not take the SAT, College Board, or PSAT, 95 percent (444 out of 469) did not take the ACT, and 96 percent (462 out of 480) did not take the ASVAB. At the 10th grade, 78 percent (376) did not take the SAT, College Board, or PSAT, 90 percent (430) report not taking the ACT, and 91 percent (442) did not take the ASVAB. Similar patterns are noted at each of the other high school grade levels even though progressively more students report taking these tests. At the eleventh grade, 62 percent (302 of 483) did not take the SAT, College Board, or PSAT, 58 percent (280 of 482) the ACT, and 81 percent (395 of 488) the ASVAB. At the twelfth grade, the distribution of students not taking these tests is as follows: SAT, College Board, or PSAT, 69 percent (330 of 480); ACT, 41 percent (200 of 491); ASVAB, 75 percent (365 of 486). It is only in the twelfth grade that a majority of the Louisiana sample (59 percent) report taking at least one of the standardized tests, the ACT (see Table 6.1).* At the eleventh grade, 42 percent indicate taking the ACT and 38 percent the SAT, College Board, or PSAT (see Tables 6.2 and 6.3).

Slightly more of the graduates from Louisiana high schools took the Armed Services Vocational Battery test in the 10th and 11th grades (see Tables 6.4 and 6.5) and the ACT in the 11th grade (see Table 6.2) than did non-Louisiana high school graduates. By contrast, students graduating from high schools outside Louisiana were more apt to have taken the SAT, College Board, or PSAT in the eleventh and twelfth grades. These observed differences are statistically significant (see Tables 6.3 and 6.6).

Examining these data by status group reveals several other interesting and statistically significant differences. Black females are more likely not to have taken the ACT or ASVAB at grades 11 and 12, and the SAT, College Board, or PSAT at grade 11 than black and white males and white females. Contrariwise, they were more apt to have taken the SAT, College Board, or PSAT at grade 12 than their male and female status group counterparts (see Tables 6.7 to 6.12).

Most North Carolina students, whether graduating from a high school in the state or outside it, report taking either the SAT, College Board, or PSAT than the ACT or ASVAB. Seventy-one percent (295) of the 417 students responding took the SAT, College Board, or PSAT in twelfth grade and 65 percent in eleventh grade. By status group (see Table 6.13), a greater percentage of white males (87 percent) and white females (85 percent) indicate these tests were taken in eleventh grade than black males (51 percent) and black females (59 percent). The percentages between white and black students taking the same tests in twelfth grade, however, are not quite as wide, although more white students report taking these tests than black students. The pattern here is as follows: black males, 67 percent (80); black females, 70 percent (101); white males, 75 percent (46); white females, 84 percent (62) (see Table 6.14).

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* All tables referred to in this chapter, except Tables 6A and 6B, are displayed in Appendix E.

Competency Test Participation

With respect to taking a high school graduation competency test, most of the 495 Louisiana students responding to our query indicate that either no test was given (39 percent or 192) or that they were not required to take such a test (48 percent or 238). This response pattern was not unexpected. However, 8 percent (29) of the Louisiana high school graduates (N = 255) and 26 percent (36) of the graduates from high schools outside the state (N = 140) did report taking a competency graduation test (see Table 6.15). Louisiana students who were subjected to the competency test requirement took the test in grades 10, 11, and 12 with slightly more of them taking it in twelfth grade (see Table 6.16). By status group, the test taking patterns are not statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level (see Tables 6.17 and 6.18).

Students attending Louisiana colleges who reported taking a high school competency graduation test were asked to indicate the number of times it took them to pass it. Most of the students responding (93 percent, N = 56) report passing the competency test the first time they took it. No significant difference was noted between black or white students irrespective of sex.

In contrast to the Louisiana students, almost six of every ten students in North Carolina report having to pass a required minimum competency test before graduating from high school. No doubt reflecting the state's competency testing requirement, 77 percent (160) of the North Carolina graduates report meeting such a requirement as compared to 42 percent (90) of the out-of-state graduates. About one-fourth (56 or 26 percent) of this latter group indicate that no test was offered and slightly less than a third of them (68 or 32 percent) report that they were not required to pass a competency test before graduating (see Table 6.19). By status group, more black male (79 or 65 percent) and female (96 or 65 percent) than white male (30 or 48 percent) and female (35 or 47 percent) students report having to satisfy a graduation competency test requirement. Overall, these differences, as displayed in Table 6.20, are statistically significant ($X^2 = 13.99$, df = 6, p = .03).

Most North Carolina students who took a graduation competency test did so when they were in eleventh grade (68 percent, North Carolina high school graduates; 30 percent, high school graduates outside North Carolina). At the twelfth grade level, only 18 percent of the high school graduates within North Carolina and 25 percent outside the state report doing so (see Table 6.21). Of the 48 students (20 percent) taking the examination in twelfth grade, 22 percent were black males, 20 percent black females, 31 percent white males, and 9 percent white females (see Table 6.22).

Most North Carolina students (94 percent) taking the graduation test passed it the first time they took it (see Table 6.23). The comparative distributions of in-state and out-of-state responses by status group do not vary more than that expected by probable chance (see Table 6.24). Eighty-seven percent (68) of the black males, 95 percent (91) black females, and all -- 100 percent -- of the white males (30) and white females (35) passed the test the first time they took it, presumably, from earlier reported data, in the eleventh grade.

Perceptions of Students Regarding Competency Tests

In an attempt to discover how students feel about taking high school graduation competency tests, they were asked whether they agreed, disagreed, or were not sure about the following statements: The tests

1. are fair.
2. are needed.
3. test material studied in school.
4. cause students to study harder.

5. are too easy.
6. cause teachers to have higher performance standards for students.
7. cause students to change their course selections.

Students also had the opportunity to specify other feelings they held about the use of such tests.

Although Louisiana did not require passage of a high school graduation competency test and, as indicated earlier, relatively few of the students took such a test, those that did so generally agreed that the tests are fair, needed, and test material covered in school. More of them were unsure or disagreed with the latter statement, however, than with the first two. Conversely, a majority of these students disagreed that the tests cause students to study harder, are too easy, cause teachers to have higher performance standards for students, or cause students to change their course selections. Since some of the students attending Louisiana colleges were from outside Louisiana and graduated from high schools that required passage of a graduation competency examination, statistical comparisons between in-state and out-of-state were made. These contrasts produced significant differences regarding the statements that the tests are "too easy" ($X^2 = 7.26$, df = 2, $p = .03$) and that they "cause students to change their course selections" ($X^2 = 6.09$, df = 2, $p = .048$). In the latter instance, greater numbers of out-of-state high school graduates than in-state graduates tended to feel that such tests do not cause students to change their course choices. In the first instance, Louisiana high school graduates had a greater propensity to disagree that such tests are too easy than non-Louisiana high school graduates (see Tables 6.25 and 6.26).

Black and white student responses in Louisiana regarding feelings about the high school graduation test display no differences that are statistically significant. Mirroring the in-state and out-of-state high school graduation comparisons, the majority of black and white Louisiana students, regardless of gender, agree that high school graduation competency tests are fair, needed, and test material covered in school. Additionally, a very slight majority disagreed that the tests cause teachers to have higher performance standards for students, although several of the students were not sure about this statement. Students also disagreed that the tests cause students to study harder, are too easy, or cause students to change their course selections (see Tables 6.27 to 6.33). Other individual feelings expressed about high school graduation competency tests were: "It is a test of luck"; "it measures test taking ability rather than knowledge"; and, "it causes teachers to teach to the test."

Focusing on competency test requirements at the college level, we examined whether students were expected to take a general college test before moving into upper division work and, if so, how they prepared for the test. We also examined whether they were required to pass a general examination before graduating and, if so, the level of confidence they held about passing it the first time.

Most of the 450 Louisiana students responding report either that they were not required to take a general college test before moving from lower to upper division work (216 or 48 percent), or that they did not know whether or not they were required to do so (132 or 29 percent). Only 102 (23 percent) indicated being required to take such tests (see Table 6.34). The findings here are statistically significant ($X^2 = 27.43$, df = 9, $p = .001$) and indicate that more black students than white report being required to take a general college test before moving from lower to upper division work. Students responding to the query on how they plan to prepare for the test disclose, in an order of frequency of response, that they will rely on the information acquired through normal or regular classes (59), engage in special study sessions (43), and take practice examinations (34).

With regard to whether a college exit examination is required, the majority of Louisiana students (50.1 percent, 227) indicated that they were expected to pass a general examination before graduating. Twenty-five percent (111) report not being required to do so, and 25 percent (115) did not know. As shown in Table 6.35, these differences, too, are statistically significant ($X^2 = 19.92$, df = 6, $p = .003$). Of the Louisiana students indicating that they were expected to pass a college graduation examination, most felt very confident (36 percent or 94) or confident (37 percent or 96) that they would pass the examination the first time. Twenty-two percent (57) were somewhat confident. Few of the students (5 percent or 13) believed they would pass the examination the first time if they were lucky, were not sure they would pass, or had little confidence in passing. The reasons these students felt they would or would not pass the examination are listed in Table 6A.

Not unlike students in Louisiana, most students attending the sample colleges in North Carolina, whether graduating from high schools inside or outside that state, believe that competency tests required for graduating from high school are fair, needed, and cover material studied in school (see Tables 6.36 - 6.38). Interestingly, a large majority of the students graduating from North Carolina high schools, 90 percent (138), and from high schools outside that state, 83 percent (68), felt that the tests were needed -- a finding which is statistically significant ($X^2 = 7.16$, df = 2, $p = 0.03$). On the other hand, North Carolina students largely disagree that the tests cause students to study harder (see Table 6.39).

A slight majority of students graduating from North Carolina high schools (52 percent) feel that the tests are too easy, perhaps a reason for their report of not studying harder because of the test (see Tables 6.39 and 6.40). Most North Carolina students also indicate that teachers do not have higher performance standards for students because of the tests (see Table 6.41). Moreover, a majority of them (66 percent in-state and 56 percent out-of-state high school graduates) do not feel that the tests cause students to change their courses (see Table 6.42).

One graduate of a North Carolina high school feels that such tests should be given before the senior year so that remedial help can be provided if necessary. Another believes that competency tests perpetuate students' feelings of anxiety and worry. Individual

TABLE 6A

Reasons Indicated by Louisiana College Students for Expecting to Pass A General College Graduation Examination by Status Group

Reasons	Black Male	Black Female	White Male	White Female	Totals
1. Doing well academically	6 (21%)	16 (55%)	4 (14%)	3 (10%)	29 (100%)
2. Course preparation has been good	11 (41%)	13 (48%)	1 (4%)	2 (7%)	27 (100%)
3. Good study habits	6 (23%)	13 (50%)	1 (4%)	6 (23%)	26 (100%)
4. Do well on tests	3 (38%)	3 (38%)	-	2 (25%)	8 (100%)
5. Faculty help and support	1 (33%)	2 (67%)	-	-	3 (100%)
6. Belief in God	-	1 (100%)	-	-	1 (100%)
7. Not prepared	2 (20%)	10 (80%)	-	-	12 (100%)
8. Tests are hard	1 (25%)	1 (25%)	-	-	4 (100%)
9. Not doing well academically	-	1 (100%)	-	-	1 (100%)

Reasons 1 to 6 are most likely attributable to students who are very confident they will pass the test at its initial administration. Reasons 7-9 account for feelings of uncertainty, lack of confidence, somewhat confident of passing, or expecting to pass only through luck.

graduates of high schools outside North Carolina feel that passing competency tests depends on taking college preparatory courses or being lucky, that these tests measure test taking ability rather than subject knowledge, and that students in city schools take different tests from those in rural schools. These additional perceptions about the use of competency tests are rather insightful even though none of them was reported by more than one student.

Ethnic status group comparisons of North Carolina students regarding their perceptions about competency graduation tests display few statistically significant differences. Black and white students, regardless of gender, display no more than chance differences concerning their overall agreement that the tests are fair, needed, cover material studied in school, or fail to cause students to study harder (see Tables 6.43 - 6.46). Whereas greater percentages of white males (87 percent) and white females (68 percent) agreed that the tests are too easy than did black males (39 percent) and females (34 percent), these differences are not beyond those attributable to chance variation (see Table 6.47).

A majority of North Carolina respondents also felt that the tests do not cause teachers to have higher performance standards for students. White males (76 percent), however, were more likely to feel this way than white females (60 percent), black males (26 percent), and black females (44 percent). Conversely, it is statistically significant ($X^2 = 24.61$, df = 6, $p = 0.004$) to note that more black males (40 percent) than black females (29 percent), white males (7 percent), and white females (24 percent) feel that the tests prompt teachers to have higher performance standards for students (see Table 6.48). Although not statistically significant, white males (90 percent) and females (72 percent) disagree more with the statement that the tests cause students to change their course selections than do black males (52 percent) and females (60 percent) (see Table 6.49).

In regard to college competency test requirements, the majority of North Carolina students report either that they are not required to take a general college test before moving from lower to upper division (242 or 60 percent) or that they did not know whether they had to satisfy such a requirement (93 or 23 percent). Only 17 percent (67) of the respondents report that such a test is required, with more black students than white so indicating (see Table 6.50). Differences in student responses are not statistically significant, however. Most students indicating that this type test is required will prepare for it by participating in special study sessions, through regular classes, and by taking practice examinations. About one-third of these students didn't know how they would prepare for it.

Are North Carolina students expected to pass a general examination before graduating from college? Slightly more respondents (162 or 40 percent) indicate that they are not required to do so than do those who say they are (144 or 35 percent). Twenty-five percent (101) were unaware of a graduation test requirement (see Table 6.51). Black students again were more likely to report that passing a college graduation examination was required than white students, although the difference is not statistically significant.

Almost two-thirds of the students in North Carolina indicating that they were expected to pass a college graduation examination report feeling very confident (38 percent) or confident (36 percent) they will pass the exam the first time. About one-fifth of them are somewhat confident. A small proportion (5 percent) indicate they will pass the exam the first time only if they are lucky, have little confidence in passing, or are not sure they wil pass.

Several reasons are given by students to justify their feelings of confidence. Those who are very confident or confident they will pass the examination the first time state that they are doing well in their academic work, have good study habits, or have the belief that "God will provide the way." Others feel they have had good course preparation and generally do well on tests. Students reporting that they will pass only if lucky, have little confidence in passing, or are not sure that they will pass, are likely to state that they are not doing well academically, tests are hard for them, or they are not prepared. The distribution of these foregoing reasons, by ethnic status group, is shown in Table 6B.

TABLE 6B

Reasons Given by North Carolina College Students for Expecting to Pass
A General College Graduation Examination by Status Group

Reasons	Black Male	Black Female	White Male	White Female	Totals
1. Doing well academically	8 (40%)	7 (35%)	2 (10%)	3 (15%)	20 (100%)
2. Good study habits	6 (33.3%)	8 (44.4%)	2 (11.1%)	2 (11.1%)	18 (100%)
3. Course preparation has been good	6 (50%)	6 (50%)	-	-	12 (100%)
4. Do well on tests	2 (40%)	1 (20%)	-	2 (40%)	5 (100%)
5. Belief in God	-	2 (66.7%)	1 (33.3%)	-	3 (100%)
6. Faculty help and support	-	-	-	1 (100%)	1 (100%)
7. Not prepared	5 (62.5%)	3 (37.5%)	-	-	8 (100%)
8. Tests are hard	1 (25%)	2 (50%)	-	1 (25%)	4 (100%)
9. Not doing well academically	1 (50%)	1 (50%)	-	-	2 (100%)

Summary

Students graduating from Louisiana high schools and attending colleges or universities in that state are less likely to have taken the SAT, College Board, or PSAT than North Carolina college and university students graduating from high schools inside or outside that state. Most Louisiana college and university students did take the ACT in either the eleventh or twelfth grade. Importantly, graduates of high schools within Louisiana were more likely to have taken the ASVAB than those from out-of-state.

Few Louisiana college or university students took, or were required to take, a high school graduation competency examination. The majority who did so were graduates of high schools outside the state. This finding was not completely unexpected since Louisiana did not, at that time, require passage of a high school graduation competency test. North Carolina did require one, and most students graduating from high schools in that state took the graduation test. (Private school students may not have had to meet a similar requirement.) A fairly large percentage of students attending North Carolina colleges and universities who graduated from public high schools outside that state also report having taken a high school graduation competency test.

In the main, both black and white students in Louisiana and North Carolina colleges and universities feel that high school graduation competency tests are fair, needed, and cover material covered in their classes. These students do not feel that the tests cause students to study harder or change their course selections, or motivate teachers to have higher performance standards for students. We hasten to add, however, that more white males in North Carolina agreed that the test did not cause teachers to have higher performance standards for students than did white females or black males and females. Further, more North Carolina high school graduates than graduates of high schools outside the state indicate that such tests are needed but are too easy.

College competency examinations generally are not required for advancement from lower division to upper division work in either Louisiana or North Carolina colleges and universities. According to the students surveyed, a majority of Louisiana colleges and universities required passage of a college competency exit or graduation examination. Most students reporting that they were expected to pass this type examination indicated confidence about passing it. Such feelings were attributable to the perceived adequacy of their academic preparation. Nevertheless, as preparation, most students planned to make use of special study sessions and practice examinations.

Chapter 7

EDUCATION OFFICIALS' PERCEPTIONS AND SCHOOL DISTRICT POLICIES AND PRACTICES REGARDING COMPETENCY TESTS

Introduction

A series of face-to-face and telephone interviews was conducted with school district superintendents or their representatives, high school principals in North Carolina, elementary school principals in Louisiana (Louisiana's then mandated basic skills tests were administered in the elementary grades only), state education officials, and admission officers, registrars, or directors of institutional research in Louisiana and North Carolina universities and colleges included in the study. State education officials who were interviewed held the position of director of research or testing programs within the respective state departments of education. Superintendents and principals were from school districts that represented the cities in which the sample postsecondary institutions were located or districts that were in proximity to these cities. High school principals in North Carolina and elementary school principals in Louisiana were selected with the approval of the school district superintendents. They served in the following cities: Louisiana - Baton Rouge, New Orleans, Shreveport; North Carolina - Charlotte, Durham, Greensboro, and Raleigh. Thirty interviews were conducted: 15 in Louisiana and 15 in North Carolina. The distribution of interviewees by professional category is shown in Table 7A.

The interviews sought to ascertain perceptions regarding development of the competency test used within the state or institution; use of the test; advantages and disadvantages of the test; effect of the test on school staff, students, and parents; whether the test measures what is important for students to know; school policies and practices resulting from use of the test; why students fail the test; school-university collaboration

TABLE 7A

Distribution of Interviewees by Professional Category for Louisiana and North Carolina

Category	Louisiana (N)	North Carolina (N)	Totals
School District Superintendent	Baton Rouge (1) New Orleans (1) Shreveport (1)	Charlotte (1) Durham (1) Greensboro (1) Raleigh (1)	7
Principals	Elementary School Baton Rouge (2) New Orleans (2) Shreveport (2)	High School Charlotte (1) Durham (1) Greensboro (1) Raleigh (1)	10
Director of Testing or Research, State Dept.	Baton Rouge (1)	Raleigh (1)	2
College Officials	Delgado C.C., City Park (1) Loyola Univ. (1) Southern Univ., Baton Rouge (1) Southern Univ., Shreveport (1) Xavier Univ. (1)	Durham Tech. Inst. (1) Duke Univ. (1) Mars Hill (1) N.C. A & T Univ. (1) St. Augustine (1) UNC-Charlotte (1)	11
Totals	15	15	30

policies and practices resulting from test usage; and whether a uniform high school curriculum should be implemented because of competency test policy.

Involvement in the Development of the Competency Test

The North Carolina and Louisiana state officials who were interviewed played a major role in developing and pilot testing their state's competency tests and are quite comfortable with the end products. Three of the four North Carolina superintendents, however, were not directly involved in developing the state test, nor were most of the Louisiana superintendents interviewed. One North Carolina superintendent served as a member of the state commission on testing, and one Louisiana superintendent served on the task force to review the Louisiana test as it was being developed. In the latter instance, the task force was thought to be largely perfunctory. Two of the North Carolina superintendents indicated that their districts, Charlotte-Mecklenburg and Greensboro, had a minimum standards program prior to implementation of the state's program.

With respect to their feelings about why the state competency test program was established, most superintendents agree that the program was intended to make students aware of levels of knowledge they were expected to achieve, and to provide a measure of school accountability. One superintendent felt the test had no performance impact but satisfied those who wrote the law. Another believed that, in a public sense, the competency test was overrated; it wasn't diagnostic, and an array of better, but unspecified, tests could be used for the intended purposes. He thought, however, that the test was satisfactory as a motivating tool.

Although most of the superintendents interviewed were not directly involved in the test validation process, they were satisfied, as were state department of education officials, with the validation process. For these officials the state competency tests used included intended content. In both states the validation process included statewide field testing, a standard-setting process, the involvement of higher education institutions, and the use of research studies.

Satisfaction with the Use of the Competency Test

Some superintendents are quite satisfied with the use of the competency tests, although for slightly different reasons. Others have mixed views regarding the tests' usefulness. One North Carolina superintendent indicates that because of the test, and the inherent minimum standards assessed, students no longer leave school unable to read and write -- they have been successfully remediated. In this superintendent's view the test is unbiased and is being properly and fairly administered. In a somewhat similar vein, another superintendent reports being "satisfied with the side effects and by-products of the testing program." Still another superintendent is satisfied with the grade level examinations that must be passed to move to the next grade. Use of test results to plan student programs and to focus instruction on student difficulties and remediation further justifies his satisfaction. From the vantage point of yet another superintendent, the competency test causes schools to put forth greater effort to improve students' test performance.

Louisiana superintendents generally are less satisfied with the test than are superintendents in North Carolina. One Louisiana superintendent feels that the state's basic skills test (used in elementary schools) has caused local school districts to be in competition. All agreed that the comparison of schools on the basis of test scores, an inevitable consequence of the publication of test scores by newspapers, is undesirable. As a result, according to another superintendent, some school districts, in order to look good, place too much emphasis on passing the test, often at the expense of addressing desirable, broad curricular objectives.

Most North Carolina principals interviewed feel positive about the competency test. Generally, they believe the competency test enables students to become aware of the knowledge they are expected to acquire, and has helped teachers focus on student needs and learning. Curriculum alignment with the test content is another value of the competency test, according to one North Carolina principal. Another indicates that the test covers the information students need to know and strikes a midpoint between high and low achievers.

Louisiana principals in the main are less positive about the basic skills competency test used in the elementary grades, mandated by the state. Part of the dissatisfaction, according to one principal, is that in theory the test is good but in practice it suffers from an overemphasis on minimum skills, a focus which constrains teachers. Another principal believes that students have become lackadaisical about the testing program and are no longer motivated to pass it. This principal further observes that students display some growth in the second and third grade, with respect to the test content, but seem to regress at grades 4 and 5, at least in those areas measured by the test. Two Louisiana principals, however, register views that differ from those noted above. In expressing their satisfaction, these principals believe the test gives parents a better idea of the educational accomplishments of the school and their children.

Perceived Advantages of the Competency Test

Most superintendents and state education officials feel that the competency test has established clear expectations for teachers and students. One North Carolina superintendent states, "the test made us see the needs of lower spectrum kids and make strong efforts to meet their needs. . . instead of just assuming low ability kids can't complete school, we are finding out why there are problems." Moreover, in his view the test helped the district improve mathematics teaching and now serves as an early warning signal for students in danger. A Louisiana superintendent holds that the test provides important information about low ability students that can be used in instructional planning.

"The test is used to work at solving a serious literacy problem in North Carolina," asserts a superintendent in North Carolina. Another offers that it has also been used to incorporate math skill building in the curriculum from elementary through secondary schools. In the view of a Louisiana superintendent, the competency test helps to define necessary parts of the curriculum and can be used for curriculum planning.

At the college level, officials also agree that there are advantages of requiring a competency high school graduation test. Several college officials believe that it's "reassuring to taxpayers to know that public colleges and universities are receiving qualified students." One official feels that the tests may be helpful for diagnostic purposes and for evaluating high school curricula. A North Carolina college official believes that the testing requirement has made students more serious and that the necessity of college remedial work is being lessened. Another supports the notion that the testing has helped marginal students.

Perceived Disadvantages of the Competency Test

The disadvantage of the competency test, states a Louisiana superintendent, is that "the test represents a rather simplistic notion of what education is or should be about. It is virtually impossible to have the test cover everything that is important to know or that should be included in a well rounded education. Tests make education too narrow." A North Carolina superintendent echoes this assertion when he indicates that the test restricts the curriculum to competencies it can easily measure. This opinion is corroborated by some principals in Louisiana and North Carolina who hold that the test limits the school program.

The competency test, says one superintendent, is "fragmented and not sufficiently comprehensive in the area of reading." In a somewhat similar manner, a principal expresses the view that sequencing instructional materials to meet testing objectives is a tremendous problem.

The needs of exceptional kids go unmet through use of the test, according to a Louisiana superintendent. This superintendent also believes that the psychological effect on students who fail the test can be quite profound. He is concerned, therefore, with how students' educational and career plans and expectations can be constructively shaped. A further disadvantage in the eyes of yet another Louisiana superintendent is the pressure it places on teachers, which fortunately has subsided somewhat but nevertheless continues. A couple of Louisiana principals articulate the belief that teachers feel there is too much testing at particular points in the school year.

Several Louisiana superintendents and principals call attention to the practice of pulling kids who fail the test out of regular classes during the school year for remediation purposes. Doing so causes students to fall behind in work required for the regular class, and they are penalized for that.

Some college officials give the competency testing program failing marks because the tests used are not sensitive enough to measure abilities and deficiencies of students for college work. They also do not sense that the competency tests are good discriminators of ability. Finally, as stated globally by a North Carolina superintendent, "there are no advantages to using the test; there has been no appreciable impact on students or teachers."

Effect of the Competency Test on Teachers and Staff, Students, Parents and Community

Overall, the responses of education officials regarding the impact the competency test has had on various segments of the school-community include comments of no impact, increased student motivation, greater school and parent accountability, and clearer student and teacher expectations. Responses relative to specific school and community groups follow.

Teachers and Staff

Two superintendents feel that competency testing has had no impact on teachers or staff whereas two others believe that it has given teachers a clearer sense of school expectations, even if the curriculum focus may be narrower. Teachers were thought to be more conscious of their classroom preparation and of tailoring the curriculum to students. In this regard, one superintendent reports that teachers analyze test performance for student grouping purposes and that they monitor student test and regular classroom performance more frequently.

The testing program has increased pressure on classroom teachers to emphasize the competency skills reflected on the test, reports two superintendents. This, in turn, consumes more class time and minimizes the time available to address other curricula content. It also creates pressure to have students attain "good" test scores. The competency testing program has a demoralizing effect on teachers, concludes a Louisiana superintendent. It signals that it is important only to teach the content of the test. This view is shared by an elementary school principal in Louisiana who, in addition, feels the test reinforces a rigid curriculum and minimum standards. Another Louisiana principal judges that about 10 percent of the teachers think the test is bothersome.

One North Carolina high school principal is convinced that in lower ability level classes, minimum test standards are emphasized. Such minimum test standards, according to this principal, have actually become maximum standards for low ability kids -- but these standards are higher than they were prior to using the test. A North Carolina superintendent concurs in part: minimum competency levels are targeted to low ability students and the passing score becomes an end rather than a starting point for higher levels of achievement.

With respect to teaching to the test, a North Carolina high school principal asserts that "within the competency test remediation program, teachers do teach to the test." This is justifiable, this principal believes, because the test is a means of exposure to such things as bus schedules and menus that are important to some students. "Teachers do teach to the test but the test content is integrated with the state curriculum," states an elementary school principal in Louisiana. In contrast, another Louisiana elementary principal admits that teachers are cognizant of the test content, but says that they do not purposely teach to it.

Fundamentally, principals believe the effect of the competency testing program on teachers to be in the area of accountability. One superintendent, however, articulates the view that administrators can not place blame for students' poor test performance on teachers. Two principals report that teachers do not consider it fair to equate their effectiveness with a single test measure. Rating teachers by test results no longer occurs, at least from the vantage point of one high school principal. In spite of such fears, teachers are generally supportive of the test, according to most principals.

Students

Students have become "acclimated to the test and find comfort in the specification or organization of what is to be learned," states one North Carolina superintendent. Another believes that students view the competency test as simply another examination, one taken for granted except by the few who fail to pass it. This superintendent believes that low ability students are quite concerned about passing the test. In his view, students are stigmatized in various ways from earlier tracking, Title I programs, and poor class performance. Failing the test is thus one more form of rejection for them -- one that is exacerbated by the diploma vs. certificate issue, for those who fail. For another superintendent, the test serves to motivate students who usually perform between the 12 and 20 percentile levels. Moreover, says this superintendent, "these students work harder now than before the test was implemented although it doesn't make them scholars." A somewhat similar view is offered by a Louisiana superintendent who believes that, because of the test, students in his district "now take education more seriously and, in general, their performance has improved." In this district, however, student attendance and discipline had already been targeted for special attention. These facets, according to this superintendent, had "improved greatly, making it difficult to know what portion of the student's more serious school response is due to the test or to the district's discipline and attendance improvement efforts."

In contrast to these views, two North Carolina superintendents find that the test has had no effect on students; most could have passed the test without a competency test law. Another avers that, for the bright kids, the test is "a joke." For other students, it is a real issue. Students who fail blame either themselves or the schools. Student apathy has become more prevalent as a result of the test, in the opinion of yet another superintendent. That being the case, students also seem to feel that schooling consists primarily of testing and learning subject matter consistent with the content of the test.

Principals note that the test causes students to take learning more seriously and to study more diligently, especially lower achieving students. One North Carolina high school principal, however, is not sure that it causes students to study harder. For this principal the test is really not that difficult; most students pass it. Several principals also note that students are now more aware of school requirements and expectations because of the testing program. Yet, the perception of one Louisiana elementary principal is that students do not seem to take the competency test seriously. This is affirmed by the success experienced by some students who fail the test initially and are then tested in an individual setting.

Parents and Community

In the main, as expressed by several superintendents, parents and community members endorse the use of the competency test because it has enhanced school expectations and school accountability. The community assumes that competency test passing scores are useful indicators of school quality. A North Carolina superintendent also thinks that parents now have a better sense of school expectations which enables them to exercise more oversight over their children's schooling, particularly parents of low ability students. In addition, the business community, in the eyes of state education officials, now equates the high school diploma with defined school-related skills.

At another level, as stated by a second North Carolina superintendent, "parents feel the testing program is a sign of the need for last resort action for students who fail the test." These parents ask, "Why couldn't there be a program to address student needs earlier?" Another North Carolina superintendent observes that "parents believe the test is too easy."

Finally, in the opinion of a Louisiana superintendent, "the competency test has had a detrimental effect on parents." In his estimation, parents place too much confidence on test scores and on the notion that the test measures all that is important to know.

Does the Test Measure What is Important for Students to Know?

Overall, education officials feel that competency tests measure important material for students to know, but some have reservations about the scope of the test content. One Louisiana superintendent is comfortable with the test because it gets at life skills: word problems, paper reading, check balancing, and the like. Yet, another feels that "it's not entirely clear what's important to learn . . . The test focuses on math, science, and reading, but what about social skills and other discipline areas?" What is missing in the test, states one North Carolina superintendent, are "measures of higher order thinking skills, higher levels of cognitive skills, the affective domain, and actual skill or task performance." One caution reinforced by a couple of superintendents is that the test must not be seen as an end in itself -- schools must not accept minimum competency levels as goals.

In the view of most college officials, the required North Carolina graduation test may measure some skills, but it does not measure college level skills. In that sense, the test does not measure what's important for students to know.

School Policies and Practices As a Result of Competency Test Use

Several inquiries were made to determine the extent to which school policies and practices resulted from the competency testing program. The concern here focused on teachers' energy and school resources directed to enabling students to pass competency tests, the amount of remediation given to students who initially fail the test, local school board responsibility for these students, and the quality of instruction they receive.

Teaching and Other Resources Directed to Passing the Test

Generally, most superintendents spurn the notion that teaching policy has been, or will be, affected by competency testing. Yet, they indicate that some curriculum shifts have resulted from testing programs. For one Louisiana superintendent, this is most evident in narrowing of the curriculum. To another, the test is pitched to such a fundamental level that it does not affect the curriculum. Several superintendents in both states feel that teachers and students know that passing the test is important. Consequently, teachers may be placing more emphasis on the test and what it measures than may have been the case prior to its advent.

One Louisiana superintendent states rather emphatically that "teachers are teaching to the test and this results in a rather sterile curriculum." This tendency is particularly true, from his vantage point, in schools that should have more program variety to meet diverse students needs. Teaching to the test and channeling resources into assisting students to become knowledgeable of the test content is not necessarily objectionable in the opinion of another superintendent. He posits that in some ways teaching to the test is similar to the strategy of mastery learning.

Remediation for Students Failing the Test

Both the Louisiana and North Carolina competency testing programs require remediation for students who fail the test. According to some superintendents, it is because of remediation that the testing program is palatable. The North Carolina budget for remediation was $7.5 million or $500 per student to each local school district in 1986, reports an education official in that state. A Louisiana principal argues that not enough resources are provided for working with students who fail or who are likely to fail the test even though remediation is provided. This principal feels that lower class size, support programs, strong staff, and more curriculum flexibility are needed. The view is stated rather succinctly by a Louisiana superintendent: "Testing is only the beginning. If you don't apply remediation, then what good is the test?"

Whereas remediation is state mandated in North Carolina, how it is implemented is a matter of local discretion. Thus, variations in student-teacher ratios results. In one school district, the student-teacher ratio for state funded remediation is 10:1. In another district in which a combination of state and local funds are used for remediation, the ratio is 7:1.

Students receive remediation if they fail to attain acceptable scores on grade level achievement tests and on the North Carolina high school exit or graduation examination. Remediation programs consisting of small classes and enrichment activities are generally reported to be available free-of-charge during the summer months and after school in North Carolina school districts and during the regular school year as a pull-out program in Louisiana. Occasionally, remedial work may also occur during the school day in North Carolina as students are pulled out of classes for remediation purposes. When this occurs, every effort is made to minimize social or stigmatizing effects and scheduling disruption.

Competency tests results are used to determine graduation eligibility and remedial class placement. Students in North Carolina high schools cannot graduate without passing the test. In general, the policy of using the competency test as a high school graduation requirement is supported by North Carolina principals. They feel the test is appropriate and fair and that very few students do not receive a high school diploma because of test failure. Those who do fail, and these are often special education students, receive a certificate of attendance. Importantly, such students are not singled out during graduation ceremonies as receiving a certificate of attendance rather than a diploma. One tragedy of this policy, however, is that students who fail to receive the high school diploma cannot be admitted into junior college programs.

North Carolina students have several opportunities, beginning in the tenth grade, to take the graduation test, including just before and after graduation. For students who fail the test, the policy is to provide summer school classes, individual tutoring, and special remediation classes in English or mathematics. One North Carolina principal feels that this creates scheduling problems since students must stay in these classes (usually six weeks or so) until they pass the test before returning to regular classes. By then, as Louisiana principals and superintendents indicate, they are behind in the class and a new problem is created. In Louisiana students were required to complete 70 hours of remediation and then "test out" of the remedial class.

Remedial classes are staffed by teachers supported by state funds allocated on a need basis to districts which also contribute, in a general way, such things as supplies. Unfortunately, in Louisiana, state funds for remediation were withdrawn in June, 1986, according to a Louisiana superintendent.

Some North Carolina principals report that a preparation course for the minimum competency graduation test is offered in their schools. In one school, if students do not wish to take the course after they have failed the test, then they must have a letter signed by their parents requesting that they not do so.

At the college level, most officials believe that is is crucial to provide remediation and counseling to college students who have preparation deficits. Many colleges receive federal financial assistance to mount special programs in this regard.

Local School Board Responsibility

Do local school boards have a responsibility towards students who initially fail the competency test? All of the superintendents believed that the local school board's responsibility with respect to students who fail the test is to ensure that the state policy for remediation is implemented. One North Carolina superintendent believes that local school boards should not assume the complete responsibility for students who fail the competency test. This superintendent indicates that schools, parents, and students must work together to address manifest educational deficiencies and problems.

Improving Instruction

To the degree that students fail the competency test because of the quality of the instruction they received or failed to receive, then their instruction should be improved, or so it seems logical to assume. A query as to "what should be done to improve the instruction received by students who fail the test" elicited mixed views, however.

According to a North Carolina state education official, there is a commitment in that state to staff development in the areas emphasized in the test -- mathematics, science, and reading. A North Carolina superintendent reports that teacher inservice is provided to improve teaching techniques when it can be affirmed, which is seldom the case, that the teacher is at fault. Although one Louisiana district attempts not to have teachers view student test performance as evaluative of their teaching, an item analysis is conducted to determine what questions students miss and what kind of assistance can be provided for teachers.

That teachers should become more sensitive to the application of materials whether or not students fail the test is the position of another Louisiana superintendent. Whereas this superintendent holds that most of the time teacher sensitivity alone will not have a dramatic effect on general instruction, he believes that it will assist students who might otherwise "fall through the system." Similarly, the superintendent of a North Carolina district reports that teachers are now more sensitive to the differences in students' maturity levels and, concomitantly, adjust their expectations to accommodate student differences.

Another North Carolina superintendent indicates that a pre-competency tenth grade test is given in his district to identify high risk students. He avers that this is a good predictor of performance on the eleventh grade test and permits the implementation of timely remedial intervention when necessary. No curriculum changes or teaching strategies were affected, however, in his district or in that of another superintendent because of students' failing the competency test.

Why Students Fail the Competency Test

First, it must be noted that several of the interviewees emphasized that the proportion of students who fail the competency test is rather small. For example, in one North Carolina school district, 93 percent of all students and 87 percent of the black students pass the test the first time they take it. In another North Carolina district the superintendent asserts that one percent of the district's students -- 50 of 5,000 -- fail the test. The reason two-thirds of this number fail is because of severe handicaps or learning disabilities. The other one-third fail "to take advantage of the educational opportunities provided and do not take the test or school seriously." Striking a different chord, a state education official attributes students' poor test performance to either a lack of support at home, the use of alcohol and other drugs, a lack of success in any arena, an inability to do well on tests, or a combination of these reasons. Students who fail the test because of these reasons reportedly are hard for any teacher to reach. Failure is thus partly of students' own making and partly the fault of the system.

The major reason for student failure, according to one North Carolina superintendent, is that school districts hold low expectations for student academic performance. This is especially noticeable for boys and late bloomers. In his district it was assumed that some students couldn't or wouldn't learn. As a consequence, test failure became a self-fulfilling prophecy. Fortunately, this superintendent indicates that the situation has changed and a concerted effort is now made to reach all kids.

Some kids simply don't have the necessary academic skills and some, including 'exceptional kids,' cannot apply knowledge to practical situations are the reasons for failure offered by a second North Carolina superintendent. Generally, observes this superintendent, the latter students do better on "tests of straight technique rather than tests of application." This superintendent also feels that the test score gap that existed when the testing program was initially implemented has narrowed between whites and minorities. Nevertheless, the gap remains. In part, this may be due to "curriculum segregation which is especially visible in the gifted programs." Simply put, black students are represented minimally, if at all, in these programs.

Other reasons promulgated by education officials to explain student test failure include nervousness and a lack of perception regarding the value of education, particularly on the part of low socioeconomic status youngsters. In the latter case, even if students apply themselves, they may not get good jobs. Moreover, one Louisiana superintendent points out, many basic jobs in the state do not necessitate advanced educational degrees. Thus, employment incentives for higher educational attainment are not compelling.

Student apathy is cited by a Louisiana superintendent as a reason not only for test failure but also for the uninspired instruction students might receive. This superintendent speculates that teachers develop a sense of hopelessness because of student apathy. He holds that student enthusiasm and motivation for learning provide stimulation and motivation for teaching. When these are lacking, teachers may not put forth their best efforts and students may not receive the best instruction.

School-University Policies and Practices Regarding Competency Testing

Three school-university policy and practice questions were posed to interviewees: "Do you feel that colleges and universities can or should work cooperatively with secondary schools to ensure that students more successfully acquire the basic skills and knowledge specified in required graduation and college entry tests?" "How can such cooperation become most effective for black students?" and, "How can colleges and universities and secondary schools work cooperatively to improve the transition of black students from high school to college?"

In response to these queries, state education officials generally feel that colleges and universities should collaborate in ways that will help students become better prepared academically. These officials were not too concerned with preparing students to pass the competency tests for college entry since they viewed the tests as irrelevant to college entry. The major area in which collaboration was thought to have potential for yielding meaningful dividends was in preparing teachers to deal with kids in jeopardy.

Some superintendents and the state education official in North Carolina postulate that universities fail to see a need to collaborate with the public schools. One superintendent hypothesizes that because the public schools receive state monies and support, colleges and universities do not believe it necessary to use their scarce resources to work with secondary schools. These educators also feel that colleges and universities fail to adequately prepare their teacher candidates in the theory and practice of teaching, testing, and learning diagnostic procedures. Some techniques apparently are taught in preservice programs pertaining to individualizing instruction, but such instruction is inadequate to meet current classroom demands, it is suggested, on student assessment techniques. Lack of teacher preparation has led, in one North Carolina district, to the development of in-district programs to improve teaching and teacher assessment.

The general observation of superintendents is that university pre-service teacher training programs do not reflect reality. In the past, according to one Louisiana superintendent, universities took the position that they knew best what was needed in preparing teachers. It must now be recognized, he asserts, that "schools are consumers of the university products and thus should have a say in what teacher preparation programs should entail." Some school districts are involved in research and could provide assistance to universities in the design and implementation of teacher preparation programs. In some school districts it is reported that universities are working in the schools and school administrators are working in the universities, particularly, in this latter case, as part-time instructors or adjunct professors.

Beyond arrangements such as these, some superintendents and principals see a real need for universities to rid themselves of the isolated ivory tower image of being unconcerned with practical educational problems. One area in which universities could make a real contribution, at least in one Louisiana superintendent's district, is in the teaching of writing at the elementary level.

The necessity for better communication between the public schools and colleges and universities must be recognized, in the opinion of another superintendent. Some Louisiana colleges and universities have placed the blame for students who were poorly trained on the public schools while failing to acknowledge that they had lowered their entry requirements and were admitting students simply to sustain enrollment levels. After much finger pointing, the problem has now been resolved: entry standards have been raised and students who meet these standards are admitted.

According to a high school principal in North Carolina, there is a need for personnel assistance from the colleges and universities, but none of those interviewed indicate that a formal collaborative relationship in this area exists between their schools and the colleges and universities in their respective geographical areas. From the perspective of another principal, bringing university personnel into the schools would be problematical. Her feeling was that university personnel would not know "what to do or how best to apply their knowledge given their isolation from the world of public school education." Effective college and university assistance efforts have included volunteer tutoring on Saturday mornings and after school remedial programs staffed by college students. Nonetheless, there is a perpetual problem with scheduling these activities because of the college student's time availability.

College officials responding to the question about working with secondary schools to enhance student performance on high school graduation or college entry tests, especially for black students, offered few options. One North Carolina college official feels that students are not getting the support they need in public schools and, although he considers tightening the curriculum a good idea, de does not see it as a visible means of help. This official further indicates that kids have to believe in themselves in order to become motivated. He is not sure, however, how to bring that about or whether colleges can help.

In working to improve the transition from high school to college, particularly for black students, a superintendent and the state education official in North Carolina advocate affirmative action programs which highlight and provide for higher educational opportunities, especially in the University of North Carolina system. Additionally, these officials feel that more financial grants for black students would help, as would summer pre-college enrichment programs in mathematics and English.

"In selecting students for college it is important to look beyond scores and consider needs, ability, and motivation to perform," states a North Carolina superintendent. He continues: "It is hard to see college resources offering much help to [black students] who are low achieving, but it is an area that needs more thinking and work." Further, he adds, "There is a need not only for black educators and role models, but also more support for traditionally black colleges." This superintendent would push for more school-college cooperation as well as financial assistance for the traditional black college. Echoing this stance, another superintendent believes that although there is no easy answer, there must be better dialogue between public schools and the state university system to close the performance gap between white and black students and to get more black students into higher education. This superintendent speculates that it may be necessary to develop a different funding scheme for public education to ensure that the public schools, two-year colleges, and universities meet the needs of all students.

Identification of black youngsters in the eighth and ninth grades who have the potential for high level academic work and the attainment of professional and academic degrees is viewed by a Louisiana superintendent as a viable means of improving the movement of black students into higher education. Through an early identification program, colleges and universities could provide motivation and incentives to propel such youngsters into high level academic and professional pursuits. In so doing, colleges and universities must commit themselves to working with these youngsters, and to supporting them financially and otherwise once students graduate from high school and are admitted into higher education programs of study. Some colleges and universities do some of this in their advanced placement programs, points out another superintendent.

High schools should counsel students more, in the opinion of a North Carolina college official. In his view, preparation and counseling are critical to success; students should be completely familiar with post-secondary institutional requirements. Similarly, another college official contends that the lack of coordination between high schools and colleges regarding entry and performance requirements is a major impediment to successfully recruiting black students into college. It also appears to be the case, from this official's vantage point, that some local school boards reject college preparatory classes because of low numbers of students. This in turn deprives students of the opportunity to acquire courses necessary for college entry. On another level, a Louisiana principal notes that rural schools have few resources and thus may be unable to offer a college track curriculum.

A few college officials and superintendents report that school-university programs have been successfully implemented. One predominantly black Louisiana university is working collaboratively with high school teachers, counselors, and curriculum coordinators in providing special honors programs for high school students, especially black students, in mathematics, science, the humanities, and the health professions. Another Louisiana university sponsors a summer program for gifted students in engineering and the humanities. One North Carolina university works with neighboring school districts to clarify admission standards and campus resources for students who may desire to attend. Another Louisiana university has a 10-year cooperative agreement with a local high school in which guest lecturers are provided, research findings shared, and tutoring provided.

In North Carolina a superintendent observed that one university is involved in a program with the public schools designed to motivate black kids. Beginning at the junior high school level, this program focuses on the acquisition of mathematics skills that are appropriate background for the eventual study of engineering. In addition, this university provides tutoring programs for public school students at the university. By this superintendent's account, it is a good program.

A slightly different college program is a summer school for youngsters who failed subjects during high school. In this program, sponsored by a Louisiana university in conjunction with a local school district, students attend classes at the university in the mornings and work in the afternoons. Money earned from working is used to pay instructional fees.

College and University Policies and Practices Regarding Competency Testing

At the college and university level, entry and placement in English and mathematics is based in part on scores on such standardized tests as the SAT, ACT, and CTBS. Louisiana does not yet require a high school graduation examination, but in North Carolina where the graduation test is required, most four-year post-secondary institutions make little use of the competency test results. It is questionnable, in the view of a few college officials, that this test measures suitability for college work. Generally, students who perform poorly on tests used for initial placement in both states are required to enroll in developmental studies or special remedial summer programs. Once placed in a developmental studies program, students must test out of it.

A further use of college level testing occurs in some colleges when students move from lower to upper division work or for graduation. In North Carolina, teacher education students must pass a state-mandated test before graduating. In some colleges and universities in both North Carolina and Louisiana, students must pass departmental comprehensive examinations when moving from lower to upper division work and for graduation. Students may repeat the graduation examination where required if they fail it initially. In several colleges, practice examinations are available. Access to some specialized programs or professional fields such as engineering and allied health is also determined by test performance.

No reliable data were available from college officials to indicate definitively that college retention or graduation rates have been affected by lower to upper division or graduation examinations. A few college officials did feel, however, that entering students are better prepared, more serious, and require less remedial work.

Uniform High School Curriculum Perceptions

This final section reports the views of education officials on whether a uniform high school curriculum should be mandated because of the competency test requirement and the effect this would have on students generally, and on college entry in particular. Both North Carolina and Louisiana have adopted a uniform high school curriculum as part of their educational reform efforts. How this curriculum is viewed and the effect it is having was of concern here.

Superintendents and State Education Officials

Superintendents are somewhat ambivalent about the efficacy of standard courses or a uniform curriculum in high school. In addition, one North Carolina state department official notes that, "although most existing curricula in the state are close to new standard courses, some teachers have to change and it may be more difficult for some students, including low socioeconomic status whites, to meet the new requirements." Nonetheless, the new requirements clarify curricular expectations and provide opportunities to meet them that are consistent across the state. Two superintendents believe their North Carolina districts already had requirements that exceeded national norms. The new state requirements were nevertheless imposed on the schools without state money or financial resources from the federal government to implement them. Since new courses are required, argue these superintendents, resources should be available so that these courses can be offered in high school.

From the perspective of a different district superintendent, the new North Carolina state requirements posed no problems and, in fact, were welcomed. This superintendent believes the effect of the new standards will be felt from lower to higher education throughout the state. Yet another superintendent thinks that new uniform requirements make the curriculum inflexible and will increase dropouts. Moreover, this superintendent finds that the imposition of new requirements is "a manifestation of the concentration of too much power at the state level." He observes that local school boards resent the loss of power to support local curriculum initiatives. In addition, he holds that "everyone is struggling with arbitrary state requirements," and that the "state is not sensitive to school building level issues . . .. If you complain, you're seen as being anti-standards." Still another superintendent feels that it is "good to have statewide requirements." He indicates, however, that "the North Carolina Basic Education Plan needs state funds if inequities across the state are to be eliminated."

Louisiana superintendents are less sanguine about a uniform curriculum. In the words of one superintendent, a uniform curriculum "misses the point of individuality . . . The only reason for uniformity is for comparison." The real need, according to this superintendent, is for consistency of quality in courses across all schools. For example, the content and quality of instruction of Algebra I should be the same in all schools regardless of geographical location or socioeconomic status classification. By simply enforcing a uniform curriculum, quantity may supplant quality. This is not to say, he continues, that increasing graduation requirements is undesirable; rather it is to suggest that course quality needs first to be addressed. If this happens, then the matter of quantity may be superfluous.

Another Louisiana superintendent projects the view that variety is needed in the curriculum if all students are to be well served. Some basic courses, however, should be required for high school graduation, particularly for students who plan to attend college. This view is reinforced by yet another Louisiana superintendent who holds that everyone is not going to attend college; therefore, we should not force every kid to march to the same curriculum drum beat. For some students "the light comes on late." Students need flexibility and an opportunity to explore courses beyond those specified by a uniform curriculum.

Principals

Although the general feeling of principals is that the new uniform curriculum requirements promote teacher accountability and are necessary as a description of minimal standards, they also feel that more curriculum flexibility is needed. In addition, while one North Carolina principal views the graduation test requirement positively, he believes that other new enactments, such as the policy that student failure in one class prevents promotion to the eleventh grade or participation in sports, will be detrimental to kids.

One Louisiana principal endorses a uniform curriculum because she feels that standardization is a means of raising faculty involvement in their work and breaking down teacher isolation by fostering teacher sharing and teamwork within departments. Another principal feels that schools have been a little too lax; thus the imposition of higher standards and a uniform curriculum is welcomed. Yet another principal posits the idea that well defined curriculum goals are much more desirable than an inflexible standardized series of courses.

College Officials

College officials generally are supportive of ensuring that students have skills in mathematics, science, reading, writing, creative thinking, and the art of conversation. Whether or not a uniform, specific curriculum will accomplish this is debatable in their opinion. At a few colleges no particular courses are required for general entry but are required for specific programs, e.g., mathematics-based. At one North Carolina college the state-required curriculum courses are reported to be fewer than those required for entry.

Recognizing that the uniform high school curriculum carries significant political currency, one college official is distressed that the North Carolina legislature has not provided money for schools to implement such a curriculum. Most Louisiana college officials were silent on this issue. However, one believed that, in principle, a uniform curriculum was very desirable but that schools need flexibility to address diverse student needs.

College Entry Requirements

With regard to college entry based on fulfilling new curricular requirements, one North Carolina superintendent feels that some students may be penalized and denied college access because they attended a school with limited and weak academic programs. Clearly, students should not have to suffer because of such occurrences. "This is an opportunity for school-university partnerships," states another superintendent. In his view, it is important for universities to know the needs and skills of students as they seek college entry with curricular deficiencies in their background.

The belief is expressed by two North Carolina superintendents that increased college admission requirements is a screening device not wholly needed or justified. Such requirements respond to athletic scandals and standardized test score declines of the past. Many students, he argues, can do college work who have not met the new requirements. A Louisiana superintendent feels, however, that this is not the climate to suggest that new requirements are invalid. The reform movement is thought to be too strong, and "the steam has to go out of the movement before changes can be made." Opposing this view is a state department of education official who feels that "students have to be more responsible for their own college preparation if they are going into higher education." This means, of course, that "state departments have to provide courses, teachers, and the means to prepare them."

With reference to how a required standardized curriculum might affect black students, one state education official suggests that the effect will be nil. In his view, "if they simply learn course content, then they will not be left behind." A dissimilar view is held by some superintendents. One Louisiana superintendent thinks the new state requirements could have an adverse impact on black students unless it is understood by post-secondary institutions that student abilities are not always revealed in their school curricular performance. Another superintendent believes that counselors need to give black students more encouragement and direction, otherwise they may not meet the new requirements for college entry. In his school district, the role of the counselor is being shifted more toward advising.

Summary

Interviews were conducted with Louisiana and North Carolina education officials -- superintendents, principals, state department of education directors of research on testing, college admission officers or registrars. These produced a wide range of perceptions regarding competency testing programs and policies that were quite similar. Although few education officials were directly involved in developing the competency tests used in their states, most are satisfied with the test's validation procedures.

Most education officials also agreed that the tests establish knowledge expectations and provide a measure of school accountability. These advantages are offset by unmet needs of exceptional students, negative psychological effects on children who fail, and limitations placed on the school curriculum.

Most teachers are generally supportive of the tests, according to education officials. Yet these officials feel that pressure is placed on teachers to teach to the test which in turn has the effect of narrowing the curriculum. Some teachers thus become demoralized since they may internalize that teaching to the test is of singular importance. Officials express the additional view that minimum standards have the tendency to become maximum standards, particularly in lower ability level classes.

As a consequence of competency testing, students have become more aware of school requirements and expectations. For many of them, however, the competency tests have had little effect. Some officials add: for bright students the tests are taken very lightly. Yet, low ability students are quite concerned about passing the tests. As a result, some of them now take learning more seriously. Parents and community members, it is alleged, endorse the use of competency tests because they can be used for purposes of school accountability and for clarifying school expectations. It is felt, however, that some parents place too much confidence on test scores and on the notion that the tests measure all that is important for students to know.

Education officials point out that, whereas the competency tests measure skills such as reading and mathematics, they are deficient in measuring important school outcomes in such areas as social skills, higher order thinking skills, affective domain skills, and actual task performance. Nor does the high school test serve as a good discriminator of ability for college entry.

An important component of the testing programs is remediation mandated by state legislation for students who fail. North Carolina spent about $500 per student for remedial purposes in 1985-86. Overall, the total state budget for remediation was $7.5 million. Louisiana temporarily suspended the allocation of state funds for remediation in 1986. Local school boards in both states, however, have the responsibility to ensure that remedial programs are available to students who fail the competency tests.

In North Carolina local districts exercise choice in how remedial programs are to be implemented and may use local funds to supplement state allocations. As a consequence, teacher pupil ratios in remedial classes may vary across school districts.

Remediation arrangements for students who fail the tests include pull-out programs, individualized tutoring, and special classes conducted after school and during summer months. Although pull-out programs may be an effective way of addressing student academic weaknesses, this arrangement presents a problem: students fall behind in the regular classes from which they have been pulled.

Teacher staff development programs based on content areas included in the competency tests have emerged in several Louisiana and North Carolina school districts. In general, the intent of these programs is to improve instruction. Yet, changes in curriculum as a result of student failure of the competency tests were not noted.

Some education officials insist that a relatively small percentage of students fail the tests. Several reasons are advanced to explain why they fail: failure to take advantage of the educational opportunities provided, poor perception of the value of education, apathy, learning disabilities. Additionally, schools assume that some students cannot, or will not, learn. Thus, their low expectations becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. Test failure, then, is attributed to both student and school characteristics.

Schools and colleges and universities apparently have not become collaborators in an effort to improve the performance of students on competency tests. Yet, education officials believe that collaboration should occur, particularly as it would relate to pre-service teacher preparation programs. Officials further feel that colleges and universities should collaborate in developing and implementing programs and practices to attract black students into college and to support them once they enter. In this regard, early identification programs, summer enrichment programs, employment of black educators who could serve as role models, and better high school counseling are examples of areas in which meaningful collaborative efforts might occur.

Existing school-university collaborative arrangements cited include: student tutoring programs for high school students; special honors program for black high school students in mathematics, science, the humanities, and health professions implemented by a Louisiana university working with high school teachers, counselors, and curriculum coordinators; a North Carolina university junior high school mathematics program designed to encourage and assist students eventually to study engineering; a work study summer program implemented at another Louisiana university for students who fail the competency tests; and an arrangement by which still another Louisiana university provides guest lecturers and shares pertinent research findings with selected local high schools.

Uniform curriculum requirements adopted in North Carolina were welcomed by most education officials because they make clear curriculum expectations. Others believe they perpetuate curriculum rigidity, will increase dropouts, and prevent local school boards from implementing school district curriculum initiatives. In Louisiana, education officials decry the inflexibility of a curriculum shaped by uniform state requirements. The practice deprives districts of the opportunity to develop programs to meet diverse student needs. At another level, college entry for poor and minority students may be further jeopardized because of uniform curriculum requirements. These students frequently attend schools that are unable to introduce and maintain quality academic programs in curriculum areas requisite for college entry given uniform curriculum standards. This situation creates a serious stumbling block, particularly since increased college entry requirements are viewed by some education officials as an unneeded and unjustified screening device.

Chapter 8

INTERRELATIONSHIPS AMONG STUDENT'S COMPETENCY TEST IMPRESSIONS, COLLEGE ENROLLMENT STATUS, ASPIRATIONS, AND PERSONAL AND EDUCATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Introduction

In this chapter the findings regarding the research questions which focused on interrelationships among college enrollment patterns, students' impressions of high school competency tests, their feelings about passing college graduation tests, their career and educational aspirations, and their personal and educational characteristics are reported. The dependent variables examined in the relationship questions are:

1. Student's level of confidence about passing college competency graduation examinations where required = very confident, confident, somewhat confident, will pass with luck, not confident.
2. College enrollment patterns = enrollment in a two- or four-year college.
3. Student's career aspirations = occupation or career to which students aspire.
4. Student's educational aspirations = highest academic degree to which students aspire.
5. Student impressions of high school competency graduation tests = are the tests fair, needed, too easy?; do they test material studied in school?; cause students to study harder?

The personal and educational characteristics (independent variables) used in the questions are grouped as follows:

1. High school background
    a. type of high school attended = public, parochial, private.
    b. type of high school program in which enrolled = general education, academic or college preparatory, agricultural occupations, business occupations,

distributive education, health occupations, home economic occupations, technical occupations, trade and industrial occupations.

c. high school gpa = self report of grades using a four-point scale in each of the following subject areas: English, mathematics, science, social studies. High gpa = 4.0 to 3.1; average = 3.0 to 2.1; low = 2.0 and below.

d. number times taking a high school graduation competency test before passing it = passed first time, passed second, third, or fourth time, never took.

2. Personal background

   a. family economic circumstances = well off, had all needed plus extras, had all needed but with no extras, at times couldn't afford needs, tough financially.

   b. father's occupation; mother's occupation.

   For purposes of the analysis the occupational codes used in the questionnaire are grouped into four categories as follows:

   (1) high status: professional (2 categories), technical, and kindred workers.

   (2) medium high status: manager, administrator, sales, proprietor or owner.

   (3) medium low status: craftsman, clerical, protective service, farmer, military.

   (4) low status: laborer, service, operative.

   The determination of occupational placement into the above categories relies on the estimated socioeconomic scores calculated by Stevens and Cho (1985) for each occupation listed in the 1980 U.S. census occupational classification scheme. Stevens' and Cho's estimates (1985) are based on the methodology originally used by Duncan (1961) to describe socioeconomic distances between occupations.

   c. father's highest educational level; mother's highest educational level.

   (1) less than high school graduate, high school graduate only.

   (2) vocational, trade, or business school.

        - (3) some college, A.A. degree.
        - (4) B.A. degree.
        - (5) graduate training.
    - d. ethnicity = black, white.
    - e. gender = male, female.
- 3. College background
    - a. self report of overall college gpa = high (4.0 - 3.1); average (3.0 - 2.1); low (2.0 and less).
    - b. self report of gpa in college major = high (4.0 - 3.1); average (3.0 - 2.1); low (2.0 and less).
    - c. college employment status = work while attending college? yes - no.
    - d. means of financing college education = personal means or support from other sources (loans, scholarships, fellowships, grants, work programs).
    - e. distance from home to college = less than 50 miles, 51-200 miles, more than 200 miles.
    - f. college class level = freshman, sophomore, junior, senior.
    - g. selection choice of college attending = first choice, second or third choice, fourth choice.
    - h. college major field = arts and humanities, biological sciences, business, education, engineering, physical sciences, professional, social science, technical, other fields.

The questions which framed the interrelationships of interest are analyzed using Log-linear analysis. The Log-linear coefficients reported are odds that can be interpreted much like the odds given on a horse's winning a race, or a football team's winning a game. That is, the odds or likelihood of occurrence, given the overall field, or other data points, is the chance that a randomly selected person will be included in the category of interest rather than in another category (Knoke and Burke, 1980). For example, odds of 3.32 could be interpreted as the odds that a black student attending college within a radius of 50 miles of his or her home is about 3 to 1.

The tables which appear in the text contain the main effects odds. Main effect odds are determined from the summed frequencies for a two way cross tabulated or contingency table. For example, if the comparisons of blacks versus whites are made across levels of confidence and it is found that the difference across the two ethnic groups are not statistically significant, then the statistics for the main effects are reported and are, thus, applicable to both blacks and whites. From another point of view, main effects are reported because interactions due to ethnicity (black versus white students) or gender (male versus female) were generally not statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level. In those instances when statistically significant interactions between levels of the variables under consideration occur, they are reported in the text.

In analyzing the interrelationship questions, students attending Louisiana and North Carolina colleges and universities are combined since state distinctions, even through competency test experiences may have been dissimilar, are not the central focus of the questions. The analysis is based on a) responses of students who were required to take a high school graduation competency test and b) those who were expected to take a college exit examination (see Table 8.1). Each question and the odds for variables examined, presented in tabular form, are discussed in turn.

What is the relationship among student's level of confidence in passing a required college competency graduation examination and ethnicity, gender, overall college gpa, college major gpa, high school gpa in selected subjects, type of high school curriculum studied, number of times taking the high school competency graduation test before passing it, family financial circumstances, family occupational status, family educational level, college

TABLE 8.1

Distribution of Students Reporting Taking a High School Competency Graduation Test and Those Who Will be Required to Pass a General College Examination Before Graduating by Sex Within Ethnicity for Louisiana and North Carolina

	Louisiana							North Carolina						
	Black		White		Totals		Grand Total	Black		White		Totals		Grand Total
	M	F	M	F	M	F		M	F	M	F	M	F	
Number of students who took a high school competency graduation examination	16 (28%)*	26 (45%)	9 (16%)	7 (12%)	25 (43%)	33 (57%)	58 (100%)	79 (33%)	96 (40%)	30 (13%)	35 (15%)	109 (45%)	131 (55%)	240 (100%)
Number of students who will be required to take a general college examination before graduating	66 (29%)*	124 (55%)	16 (7%)	21 (9%)	82 (36%)	145 (64%)	227 (100%)	61 (42%)	66 (46%)	6 (4%)	11 (8%)	67 (47%)	77 (53%)	144 (100%)

* Row percentages are based on the total responses for each category in each state.

class level, college selection choice, college major, college employment status, and college financial circumstances?

Student's level of confidence about passing a college competency graduation examination (where required) refers to passing it the first time. Levels of confidence are categorized as high (I'm very confident that I will; I'm confident that I will), medium (I'm somewhat confident that I will; If I'm lucky I will), and low (I'm not sure that I will; I have little confidence that I will; I think I won't pass the first time; not confident).

In examining the relationships among levels of confidence in passing a required college graduation examination and the personal and educational variables indicated through the use of Log-linear analysis, the odds produced refer to a comparison of the likelihood of a student being in either the high or medium confidence category as opposed to the low confidence category for the particular variable. In other words, the low confidence category serves as the basis for all comparisons. For example, the reported odds for ethnicity of 24.3 indicates that when the log frequencies are averaged for the combined group of black and white students, then for each student who has a low level of confidence, there are 24.3 who have a high level of confidence about passing the college competency examination the first time. In like manner, for each student having a low level of confidence the number who report a medium level of confidence is equal to 2.4. Thus, the ratio of high to medium to low is given by 24.3 to 2.4 to 1. This holds for both black and white students.

For each of the personal and educational variables within the groupings described earlier, odds are displayed in Table 8.2. Statistically significant interactions, at the $p < .05$ level, between variables are noted when they occur. Ratios of one (1) are non-significant and indicate that the likelihood of occurrence is equal to the reference group. For example, for the variable, type of high school attended, students from public, private, or parochial schools who expressed confidence in the medium range do not differ from students

TABLE 8.2

Log-linear Odds for Student's Level of Confidence About Passing the College Graduation Test the First Time and Personal, Family, and Educational Background Characteristics

Variable	Confidence Level	Odds
(Personal Background)		
Ethnicity	High v. Low	24.24
Ethnicity	Mid. v. Low	2.40
Gender	High	18.58
Gender	Mid	2.12
(Family Background)		
Family Financial Circumstances	High	16.31
Family Financial Circumstances	Mid	2.01
Father's Occupation	High	20.66
Father's Occupation	Mid .	1
Mother's Occupation	High	23.81
Mother's Occupation	Mid	2.66
Father's Education	High	32.79
Father's Education	Mid	1
Mother's Education	High	28.28
Mother's Education	Mid	1
(High School Background)		
Times Taken	High	9.93
Times Taken	Mid	1
Type HS	High	18.21
Type HS	Mid	1
HS Program	High	1
HS Program	Mid	1
HS English GPA	High	8.67
HS English GPA	Mid	2.47
HS Math GPA	High	13.57
HS Math GPA	Mid	1
HS Science GPA	High	11.75
HS Science GPA	Mid	1

TABLE 8.2 cont'd.

Variable	Confidence Level	Odds
(High School Background cont'd.)		
HS Social Studies GPA	High	14.61
HS Social Studies GPA	Mid	1
(College Background)		
Overall GPA	High	31.00
Overall GPA	Mid	2.86
GPA in Major	High	20.61
GPA in Major	Mid	2.86
Major Field	High	22.78
Major Field	Mid	1
Employment	High	18.77
Employment	Mid	2.24
Financial Circumstances	High	17.36
Financial Circumstances	Mid	2.29
Distance from Home	High	18.17
Distance from Home	Mid	2.22
Class Level	High	19.29
Class Level	Mid	2.37
Selection Choice	High	19.89
Selection Choice	Mid	2.36

attending these schools with low confidence. In other words, type of high school attended does not produce a medium vs. low confidence level distinction.

An examination of Table 8.2 shows that the most pronounced distinctions are associated with college, family, and personal background variables. For example, the ratio of high to mid to low levels of confidence for the variable college gpa is 31 to 2.86 to 1. This says that, for each student with a college gpa who has low confidence, there are 2.86 with medium confidence and 31 with high confidence. To further illustrate, for the variable father's education, the ratio of high to mid to low is 32.79 to 1 to 1. Thus, for each student with low confidence, regardless of father's education, there are 32.79 with high confidence, and an equal number with medium confidence.

Interactions within the background variables and levels of confidence were generally not significant except in three instances. First, a significant interaction was found between average overall college gpa (3.0 to 2.1) and medium level of confidence. Here students with average gpa's are 3.04 times more likely to have medium levels of confidence than low levels. Second, as might be expected, students with a high gpa in their major field (4.0 to 3.1) and high confidence are 5.22 times more likely than students having high gpa's and low levels of confidence. A third and final statistically significant interaction is that students attending the college of their first choice and having high confidence are 1.65 times more likely than students attending the college of their first choice having a low confidence level.

The Log-linear analysis for confidence in passing a college graduation examination and personal and educational characteristics generally indicate that the background variables fail to account for significant interactions except in the instances noted above. The odds that students will have high levels of confidence are much more likely than those with low levels of confidence about passing a required college graduation competency examination regardless of personal or educational background characteristics. That is, father's or mother's educational level, family economic status, being black or white, or male or female emerge as not being statistically significant in this analysis.

What is the relationship among enrollment in a two- or four-year college and ethnicity, gender, number of times taking high school competency graduation test before passing it, type of high school attended, type of high school curriculum studied, high school gpa in selected subjects, family financial circumstances, family occupational status, family educational level, geographical distance of college to family home, college selection choice, college major, college employment status, and college financial circumstances?

This question sought to determine the relationships among enrollment at a two- or four-year college and personal, family, and educational characteristics. The question examines whether or not there are greater odds that students with certain characteristics will be enrolled in a two-year rather than a four-year college. Given the large enrollment of minority students in two-year colleges, this question assumes an added level of importance. A question of particular interest is whether or not passing a high school graduation competency examination on the first attempt is related to two- or four-year college enrollment.

The interpretation of the odds produced through the Log-linear analysis is similar to that of the previous question. For example, Table 8.3 shows that for the variable ethnicity, for each student, regardless of being black or white, who enrolled in a four-year college, there were .36 students who enrolled in a two-year college. Similarly, regardless of gender, the odds are that students are .39 more likely to enroll in a two-year college than a four-year college.

For this analysis the reference group is the four-year college. That is, odds for two-year college enrollment, as reported in Table 8.3, represent the likelihood of students

TABLE 8.3

Log-linear Odds for Two- vs. Four-Year Colleges and Personal, Family, and Educational Background Characteristics

Variable	College Type	Odds
(Personal Background)		
Ethnicity	Two Year College	.36
Gender	Two Year College	.39
(Family Background)		
Family Fin. Cirsumstances	Two Year College	.45
Father's Occupation	Two Year College	.40
Mother's Occupation	Two Year College	.32
Father's Education	Two Year College	.25
Mother's Education	Two Year College	.20
(High School Background)		
Times Taken	Two Year College	.15
Type HS	Two Year College	.13
HS Program	Two Year College	1
HS English GPA	Two Year College	.62
HS Math GPA	Two Year College	.35
HS Science GPA	Two Year College	.48
HS Social Studies GPA	Two Year College	.44
(College Background)		
Overall GPA	Two Year College	.39
GPA in Major	Two Year College	.36
Major Field	Two Year College	.27
Employment Status	Two Year College	.33
Financial Circumstances	Two Year College	.39
Distance from Home	Two Year College	.14
Selection Choice	Two Year College	.29

enrolling in a two-year college for each one enrolling in a four-year college. The odds range from .13 for type of high school to .48 for grades in high school science in indicating the likelihood of a student enrolling in a two-year college.

Interpreted broadly, students in the sample are more likely to be enrolled in a four-year rather than a two-year college. Intuitively, given the distribution of the sample in which the vast majority of students were, in fact, enrolled in four-year colleges, this interpretation is not unexpected. Several statistically significant interactions within the student's background variables, however, are noted.

Whether or not students attended a public, private, or parochial high school, the odds are only .13 that they were likely to enroll in a two-year as compared to a four-year college. Additionally, for each student enrolled in a four-year college who passed the competency test the first time, .15 in this category were enrolled in a two-year college. It is statistically significant, however, that students in public schools regardless of ethnicity or gender were 3.84 times more likely to be enrolled in two-year colleges than students from private schools.

With reference to the type of curriculum or program students followed while in high school, the statistically significant interaction is that black and white, male and female students in college preparatory programs were only .001 (1 to 1000) as likely to select two-year colleges as those enrolled in industrial preparation programs. Two final statistically significant interactions regarding high school background are found within high school subject gpa. First, the odds are .37 that students, again without regard to ethnicity or gender, receiving A and B grades in English are more likely to enroll in a two-year college than students receiving grades of D and F. Second, students receiving A and B grades in science are .53 more likely to enroll in a two-year college as students receiving grades of D and F.

In examining the family background variables in relation to the propensity of students to enroll in two-year colleges, several additional significant interactions emerge. First, students whose families were classified as high economic status (financially had everything needed plus extras) were .72 times more likely to choose two-year colleges as those from low economic families (things were tough financially). Second, students whose fathers had high level occupations were .33 times more likely to select two-year than four-year colleges. Additionally, students whose fathers had occupations that were classified as medium low status chose two-year colleges 1.40 times more frequently than four-year colleges when compared with students whose fathers were in the low status occupation category. It is further the case that the students whose mothers had high status occupations chose two-year colleges .49 times as often as four-year colleges. In a similar manner, when mother's occupation was medium high status, students were .65 more likely to enroll in a two- rather than a four-year college.

Turning to parental education, statistically significant interactions are noted which generally parallel those pertaining to parental occupation. When fathers had only a high school education, students were 2.16 times more likely to select two-year colleges than students whose fathers had advanced degrees. Not dissimilarly, students whose mothers had only a high school education were 3.27 times more likely to select two- rather than four-year colleges. Also, students whose mothers had had some college were 2.51 times more likely to choose two-year colleges as compared with students whose mothers had advanced degrees. In general, these significant interactions indicate that the lower the occupational and educational status of parents, the more likely their children will be enrolled in a two-year college.

Although the odds for attending two- rather than four-year college are not high when considering college gpa, gpa in major, major field, employment status, means of financing college, distance, or selection choice of college attending, several significant interactions are further noted. First, students attending two-year colleges are 1.35 times more likely to be employed than those attending four-year colleges. This finding suggests that students may, in fact, choose to attend two-year colleges because it permits them to work.

Alternatively, because of their family economic circumstances, given the earlier reported findings, students must work and therefore choose two-year colleges because of scheduling flexibility. Another explanation is that two-year college students may have family obligations which necessitate their employment. A second significant interaction observed is that students at two-year colleges are 5.47 times more likely to live within 50 miles of home than students at four-year colleges. This interactive finding is, of course, consistent with the fact that two-year colleges are generally commuter colleges.

In sum, student enrollment in a two-year rather than a four-year college is significantly associated with family socioeconomic background variables, type of high school attended, enrollment in a college preparatory high school curriculum, high school grades in English and science, employment status, and distance from home to the college attending. If a student came from a low socioeconomic family (based on family economic level and parents' educational and occupational status), attended a public high school, was not enrolled in a college preparatory high school curriculum, had low grades in English and science, worked while attending college, and attended a college that was within 50 miles of his or her family home, then he or she was more likely to be enrolled in a two-year rather than a four-year college.

> What is the relationship among student's career aspiration and ethnicity, gender, number of times taking high school competency graduation test before passing it, type of high school attended, type of high school curriculum studied, high school gpa in selected subjects, family financial circumstances, family occupational status, family educational level, college class level, college selection choice, college major, college employment status, and college financial circumstances?

The careers to which students aspire were ascertained from their response to the following question, "What is your first choice career goal?" Career aspirations, which were written in by respondents, were classified using the U.S. Bureau of the Census 1980 occupation codes as follows:

Professional, technical, and kindred workers
Managers and administrators except farm
Sales workers
Clerical and kindred workers
Craftsmen and kindred workers
Operatives, except transport
Laborers, except farm
Service worker
Farmers and farm manager

The odds for this question generated through Log-linear analysis are provided in Table 8.4 and are interpreted as indicated for the previous questions. The odds of occurrence for career aspiration are made in reference to the occupational classification of craftsman since few students aspired to occupations lower than craftsman in the foregoing list. The odds reported represent the likelihood of students selecting a higher status career aspiration category compared with those choosing the occupational category craftsman.

From the odds shown in Table 8.4, students mainly aspire to careers or occupations in two categories: professional, technical, and kindred workers; and, managerial and administrative careers. Regardless of ethnicity, gender, family financial circumstances, parents' education, mother's occupation, or type of high school attended, students were more likely to express a preference for professional and technical careers than others. By ethnicity they were 167 times more likely to prefer careers in professional, technical, and kindred occupations than those classified as craftsmen and kindred workers. They also were 30 times more likely to desire careers as managers and administrators rather than

TABLE 8.4

Log-linear Odds for Career Aspiration and Personal, Family, and Educational Background Characteristics

Variable	Career Aspiration	Odds
(Personal Background)		
Ethnicity	Prof/Tech.	167.34
Ethnicity	Management	30.57
Ethnicity	Sales	0.13
Ethnicity	Clerical	0.07
Gender	Prof/Tech.	171.74
Gender	Management	30.94
Gender	Sales	0.13
Gender	Clerical	0.08
(Family Background)		
Family Fin. Circumstances	Prof/Tech.	173.47
Family Fin. Circumstances	Management	40.04
Family Fin. Circumstances	Sales	1
Family Fin. Circumstances	Clerical	0.10
Father's Occupation	Prof/Tech.	174.86
Father's Occupation	Management	24.53
Father's Occupation	Sales	0.10
Father's Occupation	Clerical	0.06
Mother's Occupation	Prof/Tech.	165.01
Mother's Occupation	Management	42.52
Mother's Occupation	Sales	1
Mother's Occupation	Clerical	0.06
Father's Education	Prof/Tech.	215.29
Father's Education	Management	41.26
Father's Education	Sales	1
Father's Education	Clerical	0.04
Mother's Education	Prof/Tech.	195.98
Mother's Education	Management	36.02
Mother's Education	Sales	1
Mother's Education	Clerical	0.05
(High School Background)		
Times Taken	Prof/Tech.	38.17
Times Taken	Management	5.57
Times Taken	Sales	0.04
Type HS	Prof/Tech.	311.69
Type HS	Management	38.17
Type HS	Sales	0.01
Type HS	Clerical	0.05

TABLE 8.4 cont'd.

Log-linear Odds for Career Aspiration and Personal, Family, and Educational Background Characteristics

Variable	Career Aspiration	Odds
(High School Background cont'd.)		
HS Program	Prof/Tech.	1
HS Program	Management	1
HS Program	Sales	1
HS Program	Clerical	1
HS English GPA	Prof/Tech.	1
HS English GPA	Management	1
HS English GPA	Sales	1
HS English GPA	Clerical	1
HS Math GPA	Prof/Tech.	88.59
HS Math GPA	Management	17.12
HS Math GPA	Sales	0.19
HS Math GPA	Clerical	0.09
HS Science GPA	Prof/Tech.	160.45
HS Science GPA	Management	31.12
HS Science GPA	Sales	0.13
HS Science GPA	Clerical	0.07
HS Social Studies GPA	Prof/Tech.	122.00
HS Social Studies GPA	Management	1
HS Social Studies GPA	Sales	1
HS Social Studies GPA	Clerical	1
(College Background)		
Overall GPA	Prof/Tech.	196.76
Overall GPA	Management	39.49
Overall GPA	Sales	0.09
Overall GPA	Clerical	0.06
GPA in Major	Prof/Tech.	192.48
GPA in Major	Management	37.04
GPA in Major	Sales	0.11
GPA in Major	Clerical	0.05
Major Field	Prof/Tech.	295.89
Major Field	Management	1
Major Field	Sales	1
Major Field	Clerical	1

TABLE 8.4 cont'd.

Log-linear Odds for Career Aspiration and Personal, Family, and Educational Background Characteristics

Variable	Career Aspiration	Odds
(College Background cont'd.)		
Employment Status	Prof/Tech.	172.09
Employment Status	Management	36.02
Employment Status	Sales	0.14
Employment Status	Clerical	0.09
Financial Circumstances	Prof/Tech.	157.59
Financial Circumstances	Management	35.30
Financial Circumstances	Sales	0.13
Financial Circumstances	Clerical	0.06
Distance from Home	Prof/Tech.	229.52
Distance from Home	Management	43.03
Distance from Home	Sales	0.13
Distance from Home	Clerical	0.05
Selection Choice	Prof/Tech.	208.93
Selection Choice	Management	44.17
Selection Choice	Sales	0.10
Selection Choice	Clerical	0.13
Class Level	Prof/Tech.	217.46
Class Level	Management	44.35
Class Level	Sales	0.17
Class Level	Clerical	0.04

those classified as craftsmen and kindred. Whether male or female, for every 172 students indicating a desire to aspire to a professional or technical career and every 31 a management or administrative career, only one student chose a career in the craftsman and kindred workers category. For every student aspiring to a career as a craftsman or kindred worker, regardless of family financial circumstances, 173 aim at a professional or technical career. Similarly, regardless of mother's occupation, father's education, or mother's education the likelihood is that 165, 215, and 196 students, respectively, aspire to professional careers for every one who aspires to the craftsman category. The likelihood of aspiring to a career in management or administration over one as a craftsman was 40 times as great regardless of family financial circumstances, 43 times as great regardless of mother's occupation, 41 times as great regardless of father's education, and 36 times as great regardless of mother's education.

By father's combined occupational classifications, 175 students were more likely to chose professional and technical careers; and 25 students, management and administrative careers, for every individual student choosing craftsman. It was statistically significant, however, that students whose fathers held medium low level occupational positions aspire to professional and technical careers only .39 times as frequently as those in the areas of craftsmen and kindred workers.

When considering high school and college variables, student's career aspiration patterns are similar to those noted earlier. For example, irrespective of type of high school attended, 312 students chose professional and technical careers and 38 chose careers in management and administration for every student choosing careers as craftsmen and kindred workers.

Interestingly, type of high school program in which students were enrolled (general education, academic or college preparatory, vocational and technical) and high school gpa in English fail to distinguish among career aspirations. That is, the analysis by type of high school program and gpa in high school English categories indicates that students are equally likely to aspire to careers classified as professional or technical, management or administrative, sales, clerical, and craftsman. Likewise, there is equality of career choices among management and administration, sales, clerical, and craftsman classifications on the basis of high school social studies gpa and college major field. Additionally, sales and craftsman career aspirations are blurred when viewed in relationship to family financial circumstances, mother's occupation, father's education, and mother's education. Given the relationship of career aspiration patterns and other independent variables noted earlier and displayed in Table 8.4, these latter observations of career choice equality were unexpected but are nonetheless revealing.

At the college level it is statistically significant that lower division college students aspire to clerical careers 8 times as often as to craftsman work. For all other college variables, with the exception of college major, students overwhelmingly aspire first to professional and technical careers and second to management and administrative careers rather than to positions in the craftsman and kindred workers category. This latter finding is generally consistent with those earlier reported.

> What is the relationship among student's educational aspirations and ethnicity, gender, number of times taking high school competency test before passing it, type of high school attended, typeof high school curriculum studied, high school gpa in selected areas, family financial circumstances, family occupational status, family educational level, college class level, college major, college selection choice, college employment status, and college financial circumstances?

As a measure of educational aspirations students were asked to indicate the highest college degree they planned to receive. For analytical purposes three degree categories were used: two-year college (A.A.), four-year college (B.A., B.S., B.D.), and advanced graduate or professional (J.D., L.L.B., M.A., M.S., M.B.A., M. Div., M.D., D.D.S., D.V.M., D.O., Ed.D., Ph.D.). In the Log-linear analysis, two-year and four-year college degree aspirations are compared with advanced graduate or professional degree aspirations. The odds for this question are shown in Table 8.5.

Overall, students indicate a greater preference for obtaining four-year college degrees than advanced graduate or professional degrees. The odds contained in Table 8.5 reveal that black and white students display no difference in being 4.03 times more likely to aspire to the four-year college degree than an advanced or professional degree. These students indicate a preference for the two-year college degree as a goal only .05 as often as an advanced degree.

It is statistically significant that black students aspire to the A.A. degree .66 times as frequently as white students. That is, for every 100 white students indicating that the A.A. was the highest degree to which they aspired, only 66 black students did so. It is also statistically significant that students from public schools were 5 times more likely to indicate that the A.A. degree was the highest degree they planned to receive than students from private schools. Students from parochial schools were only .13 as likely to aspire to the A.A. degree as students from private schools. High school grades in science courses also display a significant interactive relationship regarding degree aspiration: students receiving A and B grades in science courses were .009 times as likely to aspire to the A.A. over an advanced degree as students receiving D and F grades. In this instance, the odds are that for every 1,000 students with D's and F's in science aspiring to the A.A. degree only 9 students with A's and B's in science would aspire to this degree.

When examining family background variables in regard to students' educational aspirations, several other statistically significant interactions are observed. Students from high economic status families were only .51 times as inclined to view the A.A. degree as the highest desired educational degree as were students from low economic status families. Students from high economic status families, however, were 1.4 times more likely to prefer the four-year college degree over an advanced degree. With respect to parental

TABLE 8.5

Log-linear Analysis Odds for Educational Aspiration and Personal, Family, and Educational Background Characteristics

Variable	Educational Aspiration	Odds
(Personal Background)		
Ethnicity	AA Degree	0.05
Ethnicity	BA Degree	4.03
Gender	AA Degree	0.04
Gender	BA Degree	4.45
(Family Background)		
Family Fin. Circumstances	AA Degree	0.06
Family Fin. Circumstances	BA Degree	3.79
Father's Occupation	AA Degree	0.03
Father's Occupation	BA Degree	4.85
Mother's Occupation	AA Degree	0.04
Mother's Occupation	BA Degree	4.10
Father's Education	AA Degree	0.01
Father's Education	BA Degree	6.70
Mother's Education	AA Degree	0.02
Mother's Education	BA Degree	5.79
(High School Background)		
Times Taken	AA Degree	0.10
Times Taken	BA Degree	4.00
Type HS	AA Degree	0.01
Type HS	BA Degree	6.92
HS Program	AA Degree	1
HS Program	BA Degree	3.15
HS English GPA	AA Degree	0.09
HS English GPA	BA Degree	4.35
HS Math GPA	AA Degree	0.06
HS Math GPA	BA Degree	4.05
HS Science GPA	AA Degree	0.10
HS Science GPA	BA Degree	3.20
HS Social Studies GPA	AA Degree	0.11
HS Social Studies GPA	BA Degree	3.29

TABLE 8.5 cont'd.

Log-linear Analysis Odds for Educational Aspiration
and Personal, Family, and Educational Background Characteristics

Variable	Educational Aspiration	Odds
(College Background)		
Overall GPA	AA Degree	0.05
Overall GPA	BA Degree	4.66
GPA in Major	AA Degree	0.05
GPA in Major	BA Degree	4.28
Major Field	AA Degree	0.02
Major Field	BA Degree	4.54
Employment	AA Degree	0.04
Employment	BA Degree	4.59
Financial Circumstances	AA Degree	0.06
Financial Circumstances	BA Degree	4.25
Distance	AA Degree	0.01
Distance	BA Degree	8.48
Class Level	AA Degree	0.03
Class Level	BA Degree	4.88
Selection Choice	AA Degree	0.04
Selection Choice	BA Degree	4.85

occupation, students whose fathers held medium-low status occupations were 3.4 times more inclined to indicate partiality towards obtaining the A.A. degree rather than an advanced degree. Further, students whose fathers had attained no more than a high school education were 6.7 times more likely to choose the A.A. degree over an advanced degree when compared with students whose fathers had an advanced degree.

The most statistically significant interactions pertaining to students' educational aspirations emerged in the analysis of college background variables. Students with a high overall college gpa were only .39 times as likely as students with a low gpa to choose the four-year college degree over the advanced degree. Stated differently, more students with high overall college gpa's were likely to aspire to an advanced graduate or professional degree than students with low overall college gpa's. Similarly, students reporting a high gpa in the college major field were .58 times as likely to choose the four-year college degree over an advanced degree as were students with a low gpa in their major field of study.

Students' employment status and means of financing college also yielded statistically significant interactions. Employed students, who were mainly enrolled in two-year colleges, were 1.7 times more likely than students not employed to aspire to the A.A. degree over an advanced or professional degree. On the other hand, employed students were .69 times as desirous of the four-year college degree over an advanced degree as students not employed. Moreover, students relying primarily on personal resources were 1.5 times more likely than students receiving financial assistance to aspire to the two-year degree than to an advanced degree.

Statistically significant interactions are also associated with distance from home to college. Students living within 50 miles of the college in which they were currently enrolled were 8.8 times more inclined to aspire to the A.A. degree over an advanced degree than students living over 200 miles from college. This finding is consistent with the earlier finding that students attending college within a radius of less than 50 miles from their homes were most probably attending a two-year college. It was further observed that students living between 50 and 200 miles from college were 2.4 times more likely than students living over 200 miles to choose the B.A. degree over an advanced degree. In addition, students living less than 50 miles from the college campus, as opposed to those whose homes were over 200 miles, were only .42 times as likely to choose the B.A. or a four-year college degree over an advanced degree. Apparently, the further away from home students travel to attend college, the higher the college degree to which they aspire.

Generally, most students surveyed, regardless of ethnicity, gender, or personal and educational characteristics, aspire to a four-year college degree rather than a two-year or an advanced or professional degree. Students who aspire to receive two-year college degrees are more likely to be graduates of a public high school; to have received D and F grades in high school science; to have families with low financial means, whose fathers hold medium-low status occupations and who have completed no more than a high school education; to have low college gpa's overall and in their major fields of study; to be employed while attending college and relying primarily on personal resources to finance their college education; and to live within a 50 mile radius of the college they are attending. Relatively few students in the sample aspired to an advanced or professional degree. Those that did were more likely to have high gpa's in high school and college, to have high economic status families, and to attend a college more than 200 miles away from their homes.

What is the relationship among students' impressions about the use of high school competency graduation examinations and ethnicity, gender, type of high school attended, type of high school curriculum studied, high school gpa in selected subjects, overall college gpa, levels of confidence in passing a college competency graduation examination, enrollment in a two- or four-year college, educational aspirations, and career aspirations?

The impressions formulated by college students relative to the use of required high school competency graduation tests were ascertained through student responses to forced-choice questionnaire items. Questionnaire responses regarding student impressions of the high school competency test they had taken were:

1. They are fair (TF).
2. They are needed (TN).
3. They test material studied in school (TS).
4. They cause students to study harder (TC).
5. They are too easy (TE).
6. They cause teachers to have higher performance standards for students.
7. They cause students to change their course selections.

In the examination of this question, only the first five responses are included since these focus more sharply on effects such tests have on students as well as their feelings about test need and fairness. The Log-linear analysis here focuses on the relationships among the following independent variables -- 1) levels of confidence students who are required to take a college competency graduation examination have about passing it, 2) enrollment in a two- or four-year college, 3) educational aspirations, 4) career aspirations -- and impressions about the use of high school competency graduation examinations as dependent variables. Reported in Table 8.6 are the main effect Log-linear odds for each background (independent) variable and each of the five responses used to describe student impressions in regard to the use of the high school graduation competency test (dependent variables). The relationships examined are described for each of the independent variables.

Levels of Confidence

For purposes of this analysis, levels of confidence refer to passing a college graduation competency examination the first time taking it and are reported as high,

TABLE 8.6

Main Effect Log-Linear Odds for Selected Student Variables and Impressions About High School Graduation Competency Tests

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Categories and Odds-ratios
		High vs. Low
Levels of Confidence	TF	17.44
	TN	18.32
	TS	12.05
	TC	16.71
	TE	24.61
		Two vs. Four Year
Schools		
Two- vs. Four-Year Schools	TF	.176
	TN	.130
	TS	.132
	TC	.169
	TE	.129
		AA vs. Adv. Degree
Educational Aspirations	TF	.038
	TN	.031
	TS	.021
	TC	.010
	TE	.023
		BA vs. Adv. Degree
	TF	4.95
	TN	4.81
	TS	5.20
	TC	9.93
	TE	6.28
		Prof./Tech. vs. Clerical
Career Aspirations	TF	99.20
	TN	82.48
	TS	30.43
	TC	152.0
	TE	85.55
		Management vs. Clerical
	TF	8.75
	TN	1.0
	TS	4.44 (vs.Sales)
	TC	23.20
	TE	24.67

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Categories and Odds-ratios
		Sales vs. Clerical
Career Aspirations (cont'd.)	TF	.04
	TN	.11
	TS	
	TC	.02
	TE	.02
		Black vs. White
Ethnicity	TF	3.09
	TN	3.42
	TS	2.37
	TC	3.66
	TE	3.29
		Male vs. Female
Gender	TF	1.0
	TN	1.0
	TS	0.60
	TC	1.0
	TE	0.71
		Public vs. Private
H. S. Type	TF	100.32
	TN	89.91
	TS	140.89
	TC	114.55
	TE	124.71
		Parochial vs. Private
	TF	.15
	TN	.12
	TS	.15
	TC	.24
	TE	.23
		High vs. Low
College GPA	TF	1
	TN	1
	TS	1
	TC	1
	TE	1

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Categories and Odds-ratios
		Mid vs. Low
College GPA (cont'd.)	TF	3.91
	TN	12.91
	TS	4.23
	TC	4.26
	TE	4.72
		A vs. D
High School Grades: English	TF	8.27
	TN	1
	TS	10.24
	TC	8.12
	TE	11.54
		B vs. D
	TF	8.32
	TN	8.86
	TS	5.57
	TC	6.67
	TE	8.28
		C vs. D
	TF	1
	TN	1
	TS	1
	TC	.40
	TE	1
		A vs. D
High School Grades: Math	TF	2.82
	TN	1
	TS	2.54
	TC	3.46
	TE	3.50
		B vs. D
	TF	4.77
	TN	6.51
	TS	4.05
	TC	3.79
	TE	3.54

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Categories and Odds-ratios
High School Grades: Math (cont'd.)		C vs. D
	TF	1
	TN	1
	TS	1
	TC	1
	TE	1
		A vs. F
High School Grades: Science	TF	20.70
	TN	17.08
	TS	13.78
	TC	13.57
	TE	17.32
		B vs. F
	TF	17.08
	TN	20.57
	TS	12.61
	TC	20.52
	TE	17.05
		C vs. F
	TF	4.78
	TN	1
	TS	2.89
	TC	1
	TE	1
		D vs. F
	TF	.10
	TN	1
	TS	.20
	TC	1
	TE	1
		A vs. F
High School Grades: Social Science	TF	42.44
	TN	11.35
	TS	27.77
	TC	25.74
	TE	31.11
		B vs. F
	TF	27.88
	TN	25.33
	TS	17.01
	TC	16.49
	TE	22.29

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Categories and Odds-ratios
		C vs. F
High School Grades: Social Science (cont'd.)	TF	.31
	TN	1
	TS	1
	TC	1
	TE	1
		D vs. F
	TF	1
	TN	1
	TS	1
	TC	1
	TE	1

TF = Tests are Fair; TN = Tests are Needed; TS = Tests Material Studied; TC = Tests Cause Students to Study Harder; and TE = Tests are Too Easy.

medium, or low as was described earlier (see p. 183). For example, odds reported for levels of confidence reflect the number of students with high confidence for each student with low confidence for the following variables: the tests are fair (TF), they are needed (TN), they test material studied in school (TS), they cause students to study harder (TC), and they are too easy (TE).

The first statistically significant interaction observed is that students with high levels of confidence about passing a college graduation competency examination, when such was required, were 17 times more likely to consider the high school competency graduation test to be fair than were students who had a low confidence level. Further, students who considered the high school graduation competency test to be fair were 2.8 times more likely to have a medium level of confidence than a low level.

In another dimension, students with high confidence levels were 18 times more likely to consider the high school competency test to be needed than were those in the low confidence category. Students with high levels of confidence were also 12 times more likely to indicate that the high school competency test covered material studied in school than were low confidence level students. In addition, high confidence level students were 17 times more likely than low confidence level students to believe that the high school competency test caused students to study harder. A final statistically significant finding in this category is that high confidence level students considered the high school competency test to be too easy by 25 to 1 over students with low confidence.

From the foregoing significant differences, it is apparent that students who are required to take a college graduation competency examination and who possess a high level of confidence about passing it the first time it is administered to them are more apt to feel that high school competency graduation tests are fair, needed, are aligned with the school curriculum, and cause students to study harder than students whose confidence level about passing the examination is low. This latter view is somewhat unexpected since the high confidence students, by a large margin, view the high school test as being too easy.

Perhaps this seemingly paradoxical situation is attributable to high confidence students believing the high shool competency test causes students other than themselves to study harder. A more definitive explanation, however, is not evident from the data analysis.

Enrollment in Two- or Four-Year Colleges

The analysis here sought to discover differences in impressions about high school graduation competency tests on the basis of the college level at which students were enrolled -- two- or four-year. Students attending two-year colleges were only .17 times as likely to consider the high school competency test to be fair, .13 times as likely to consider it needed, .13 times as likely to consider that it covered material studied in school, .18 more likely to feel that the test caused them to study harder, and .12 times as likely to consider the test too easy as students at four-year colleges. Within the sample of two-year college students, those who felt that the high school test caused them to study harder were 1.74 to 1 times more likely to express this feeling than those not doing so. Thus, by combining the additive effects (.18 + 1.74), students within two-year colleges were actually about twice as likely to express the belief that the high school test encouraged them to study more diligently than students who felt the test did not. In general, however, students enrolled in four-year colleges were likely to agree more frequently than two-year college students that the tests were fair, needed, covered school material, caused students to study more, and were too easy.

Educational Aspirations

The central focus of the analysis of educational aspiration was to determine whether students who aspired to a two-year, four-year, or advanced college degree differed with respect to their impressions of the high school graduation competency test. As in the previous analyses, statistically significant interactions are reported.

Compared to students seeking an advanced degree (the reference group for this analysis), students who aspired to the two-year college degree were only about .04 times as inclined to hold the view that the high school graduation test was fair. On the other hand, students aspiring to the B.A. degree (four-year college degree) were 5 times more likely to believe that the high school test was fair than were students aspiring to an advanced college degree. Similarly, two-year college degree aspirants were .03 times more likely to hold the impression that the high school test was needed than were advanced college degree aspirants. Those aspiring to the four-year college degree were 5 times more likely than those aspiring to an advanced degree also to have this impression.

In regard to whether the high school test was inclusive of material studied in school, students aspiring to the A.A. degree were .02 times more likely to agree that the test covered what was included in the school curriculum than were students who desired an advanced degree. Those seeking the B.A. degree were 5 times more inclined to believe the test covered school learnings than were those aspiring to an advanced degree. Within the category of students desiring the B.A. degree as opposed to an advanced degree, it is statistically significant to note that those students who felt the test covered school curricula studied were 3 times more likely than those who disagreed with this view. When this interactive effect is added to students seeking the B.A. as opposed to an advanced degree, B.A. degree aspirants were 8 times more likely to believe that the high school test covered material studied in school than were students having the opposite impression.

At another level, students who aspired to the A.A. degree were only .01 times as likely to indicate that the high school test caused them to study harder as were students whose aspiration was an advanced degree. Further, students seeking the B.A. degree were 10 times more likely to support this view than students aspiring to an advanced degree. When comparing students who believed the test caused them to study harder with students who did not share this belief, a significant interaction showed that A.A. degree aspirants were .33 times as likely as students seeking advanced degrees to hold the positive view.

As to whether the high school test was too easy, students aspiring to the A.A. degree were .02 times as likely to feel that way as were students seeking advanced degrees. B.A. degree aspirants, however, were 6 times more likely to indicate that the test was too easy than were those students ultimately desiring an advanced degree.

In general, college students aspiring to receive the B.A. degree are more likely to indicate that the high school graduation competency test they were required to take was fair, needed, covered material studied in school, and caused students to study, but yet was easy than are A.A. degree aspirants.

Career Aspirations

In the earlier Log-linear analysis of career aspirations, the career or occupational reference group used was craftsman. That is, odds were calculated for the likelihood of respondents selecting another career choice over that of craftsman. In the present analysis, because of empty cells, the career or occupational reference group is clerical positions. Thus, impressions about the high school competency graduation test are reported for students aspiring to careers in occupational categories other than clerical in comparison with those that are. Again, only significant interactions are highlighted.

Students aspiring to professional and technical careers were 99 times more apt to view the high school competency test as being fair than were students aspiring to clerical careers. Further, students who desired to attain managerial and administrative careers were 9 times more likely to view the high school test as being fair than clerical career aspirants. Students who aspired to sales careers, however, were only .03 times more inclined to feel that the high school test was fair than were students desiring a clerical career.

Students who agree that high school graduation competency tests are needed are 83 times more likely to be those who aspire to a professional or technical career than those who aspire to a clerical career. And those who seek careers in sales are only .11 times as likely to agree as those who seek clerical careers.

In considering whether the high school competency test causes students to study harder, professional and technical career aspirants were 152 times more inclined, managerial and administrative career aspirants 23 times more inclined, and those seeking careers in sales were only about .02 times as inclined to agree that they do as were students whose career goal was in the clerical field. Finally, students who sought professional and technical careers were 86 times more likely to agree that the high school competency test was too easy than clerical aspirants. Again, when compared with students seeking clerical careers, managerial and administrative career aspirants were 25 times more likely to believe the tests are too easy.

Overall, students whose ultimate career goal was in the professional and technical domain were more strongly inclined to view the high school competency test as being fair and needed, as causing students to study harder, and yet as being too easy than those who indicated a clerical career goal preference. While not as strong in the likelihood of their agreement as those aspiring to professional and technical careers, students seeking careers in management and administration, and to a still lesser extent in sales, also were more likely to agree with the foregoing high school competency test impressions than students whose career goal was in the clerical domain.

Ethnicity and Gender

Black students in Louisiana and North Carolina generally are more likely to view the high school graduation competency test as being fair and needed, as testing material studied in school, and as being too easy about 3 times, on average, more frequently than white students. They are also more likely to feel that the tests are too easy about twice as often as white students. These findings for combined state totals differ slightly from those noted earlier for comparisons by state. In those comparisons (see pp. 165-170) there were no statistically significant differences between black and white students graduating from high schools within and outside Louisiana and few statistical differences on the basis of ethnicity for similar comparisons in North Carolina.

Male and female students, irrespective of ethnicity, share similar views about high school competency tests. Both groups are equal in the belief that these tests are fair, needed, and cause students to study harder. Males, however, are .60 times as likely to indicate that the tests cover material studied in school and .71 times as likely to view them being too easy as females. In other words, females profess that the tests motivates students to study more diligently while simultaneously specifying that they are too easy more frequently than male students.

High School Type

Do students vary in their perceptions of high school graduation competency tests on the basis of the type of high school they attended? Odds reported in this regard refer to the likelihood of a graduate of a public high school having a particular test perception, given the response set, as compared with those who graduated from private high schools. Similarly, students graduating from parochial high schools are compared with graduates of private high school.

For every student graduating from a private school who believed high school graduation competency tests to be fair, 100 students who graduated from a public high school felt this way. For each private school graduate who indicated that the tests were needed, 90 public school graduates so indicated. In a similar manner, private school graduates responding that the tests covered material studied in school were likely to be outpaced by public school graduates by odds of 141 to 1. Public school graduates also were 115 times more likely to point out that the test stimulates students to study assiduously than were private school graduates. Further, for each private school graduate who indicated that the tests are too easy, 125 public school graduates did so.

The likelihood of a graduate of a parochial school rather than a graduate of a private school agreeing that the high school graduation competency test is needed was only .15 to one or 15 to 100. Other responses comparing graduates of parochial schools with those of private schools were generally similar. That is, parochial school graduates believing the tests were needed were .12 times as likely as graduates of private schools who felt the tests were necessary. For those reporting that the tests cause students to study harder, parochial graduates were .15 times as likely as private school graduates.

Do the tests cause students to study harder? The reported odds are .24 that parochial school graduates think so compared with private school graduates. Furthermore, parochial school graduates were .23 times as likely to believe that the tests were too easy as private school graduates.

College GPA

Interestingly, there were no variations in the views of college students with high gpa's (4.0 to 3.1) and those with low gpa's (2.0 and below) regarding their perceptions of high school graduation competency tests. Both groups were equal in their perceptions that the tests were fair, needed, covered material studied in school, caused students to study more, and were too easy. A different picture emerges, however, when students with medium overall college gpa's (3.0 to 2.1) are compared with those whose gpa's are low (2.0 and below). Students with medium gpa's are about 4 times more likely to report that the high school graduation competency tests are fair, include school material studied, cause greater student study efforts, and are too easy than are students with low gpa's. Middle level gpa students are 13 times more likely to believe that the tests are needed than low gpa students.

High School GPA

A final analysis was conducted on the basis of high school grades in selected subject areas -- English, mathematics, science, and social science. Within the English and mathematics subject areas, response comparisons were made between the following reported grades: A vs. D, B vs. D, C vs. D. Science and social science comparisons are made between A vs. F, B vs. F, C vs. F and D vs. F. In each subject area the reference grade used for the Log-linear analysis is the lowest one reported.

For each of the above subject areas the higher the grade or gpa earned the greater likelihood the student agreed with the statements that the competency tests were fair, needed, tested material covered in school, caused students to study more, and that the tests were too easy. These feelings are more pronounced for students earning A's and B's in social science and science, as compared with those earning F's, than is the case in the other subject areas (see Table 8.6).

Summary

Students' level of confidence about passing a college graduation examination, if required, propensity to enroll in a two-year rather than a four-year college, career aspirations, education aspirations, and impressions about the high school graduation competency test in relationship to selected personal and educational characteristics associated with them were described. Students' personal and educational characteristics included: ethnicity, gender, overall college gpa, college major gpa, high school gpa in English, mathematics, science, and social science, type of high school curriculum or program studied (college preparatory or academic, general, vocational or technical), number of times taking the high school competency graduation test before passing it, family financial circumstances, family occupational status, family educational level, college class level, college selection choice, college major, college employment status, and college financial circumstances. Relationships were analyzed through the use of Log-linear analysis through which the odds or likelihood of a condition occurring are generated.

It is clear that students with high levels of confidence are much more likely to believe they will pass a college graduation examination, if required, than those with low levels of confidence. Regardless of personal and educational background variables, the odds are greater that students will have high levels of confidence about passing a mandatory college graduation examination than that they will have a low level of confidence.

The requirement of a college graduation examination, which was evident in several of the four-year colleges and universities included in the study, appears not to have deterred enrollment in these institutions. What does seem to influence enrollment in a two- or four-year college is family background and selected educational characteristics. Whereas most students in the sample were enrolled in four-year colleges and universities, those students from low socioeconomic circumstances (based on family income, occupation, and education), who graduated from a public high school, who were not enrolled in an academic or college preparatory curriculum or track, who had low grades in English and science, who attended a college within a 50-mile radius of their family home, and who worked while attending college were more likely to be enrolled in a two-year rather than a four-year college or university. Moreover, the likelihood that students passed the high school competency graduation test, where required, at the first sitting is much greater for those attending four-year rather than two-year institutions.

The majority of students, regardless of ethnicity, gender, family financial circumstances, parental education, mother's occupation, or type of high school attended aspire to careers that fall in either of two occupational categories: professional, technical, and kindred workers; and managers and administrators except farm. A solid majority of students also have a greater aspiration to obtain a B.A. degree rather than a two-year college degree or an advanced graduate or professional degree. This finding holds without regard to ethnicity, gender, or personal and educational characteristics. Students who can be described as two-year college degree aspirants, in general, are those who graduated from a public high school, received D's and F's in high school science, had families which could be classified as being of low socioeconomic status, had low gpa's in overall college work as well as in the major field of study, worked while attending college and relied on personal means to finance their education, and lived within 50 miles of the college they were attending. On the other hand, students who were more likely to aspire to an advanced graduate or professional degree were more likely to have earned high grades in high school, to come from families in which parental education and occupations were high and family financial circumstances more than adequate, and to attend a college more than 200 miles from their family home. It is worth noting that the greater the distance to college students attend, the higher the academic degree to which they aspire. Causation should not, however, be inferred.

The impressions most students have about high school graduation competency tests are positive. They generally agree with the statements that the tests are fair, needed, cover material they study in school, cause students to study more, and are too easy. Students possessing high confidence levels about passing a college graduation test, if required, the first time they take it are more likely to have positive feelings about the tests than those with low levels of confidence. Likewise, four-year college students, B.A. degree aspirants, and those aspiring to professional, technical, managerial and administrative careers, also agree more frequently with the above statements than comparison groups in each category. Females more than males, black students more than white, public high school graduates more than private or parochial school graduates, and students with high rather than low high school gpa's similarly view the tests positively with respect to the foregoing statements. Finally, students with middle range college gpa's (3.0 to 2.1) are more apt to agree with the test impression questions than are those with low (2.0 and below) gpa's. No distinction on feelings about the tests emerges between students with high overall college gpa's (4.0 to 3.1) and those with low gpa's.

Chapter 9

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

Minimum competency testing programs for high school graduation and grade level promotion have been implemented in most of the nation's public school systems. In several states competency testing programs are also used for college advancement and graduation. In both schools and colleges such programs are convincingly portrayed as a means of certifying that students possess minimal skills and knowledge in selected subject areas.

In the two states included in this study, competency testing programs are at different stages of implementation. In Louisiana the public school Basic Skills testing program has been implemented since 1981-82. That program was initiated at grade 2 with subsequent higher grades added each year. In 1986 the test was administered in grades 2 through 5. By 1992 the test would have included each grade from 2 through 12. A new competency testing program was mandated by the Louisiana legislature in June 1986. The new program requires students to pass an eleventh grade graduation competency test beginning no later than the 1988-89 school year. It further calls for annual testing at grades 3, 5, and 7 beginning with the 1987-88 school year.

North Carolina has required passage of a high school graduation competency examination to obtain the high school diploma, which is a prerequisite for entry into that state's community colleges, since 1978. North Carolina also has an annual test requirement at grades 1, 2, 3, 6, and 9. In both states students in the public universities must pass a competency test in selected areas of study before graduating.

The perceptions of students and education officials, and the effect these tests have had on black students, have been the focus of this study. In this chapter thematic threads that are woven through the findings are discussed and policy implications drawn. The following themes provide the chapter's organization: general observations concerning competency testing; advantages of competency testing; disadvantages of competency testing; effects of competency testing on black students; and policy implications. We hasten to add that, because of the nature of the sample, findings and implications pertain to the sample only, although it is not unlikely that similar findings would emerge in other settings.

General Observations Concerning Competency Testing

Education officials -- superintendents, principals, state department of education professionals, college admission officers -- in Louisiana and North Carolina paint an interesting picture of required competency testing programs in their states. The Basic Skills Testing program that existed in Louisiana until June, 1986, and the high school diploma competency testing program in North Carolina are seen as a vital part of the school and teacher accountability landscape. However, the fundamental responsibility for passing the test resides with the student.

The tests used are viewed by most as being fair and having reasonable passing requirements. The tests are thought further to raise levels of student achievement, to ensure minimum standards, and to bring about consistency in school curriculum within each state. In the opinion of some officials, raising school standards may result in losing some students, but it is a cost that must be expected as schools seek to ensure that the diploma is an index of some minimum body of knowledge.

Competency testing programs may in fact satisfy politicians, parents, and the community as a means of school accountability, but the programs are not considered by many education officials as vehicles to ensure quality education for all students. To the contrary, the testing programs have served, in many instances, to narrow the curriculum and the focus of teaching. The tests used in Louisiana and North Carolina, as in many of the other states which have mandated minimum competency testing programs, focus mainly on mathematics and reading. Occasionally, these tests may include writing and science.

These areas, however, represent but a small segment of what students should learn in school. The social sciences, social skills, higher order thinking skills, in addition to those mentioned above, are thought by many officials to be important for a well-rounded education. Instead of narrowing the curriculum through competency testing programs, the aim of schools should be to broaden the scope of learning, to elevate and improve teaching, and to provide educational programs which will meet the needs of a diverse student population.

The key to student learning is good teaching which is nurtured in a supportive school environment cultivated and maintained through the effective leadership of the principal. Securing good teachers and improving teaching is not accomplished through student competency testing programs. In fact, as argued by some officials, such testing programs, although generally supported by teachers, may serve to promote teacher dissatisfaction. Teachers may find that teaching test content is restrictive and demoralizing.

Passing a competency test is an important goal for students and schools anxious to demonstrate a measure of accountability. Yet, the appropriateness of test scores as a single measure of school accountability must be questioned. Teaching students to pass a competency test by emphasizing test taking skills is not without merit. Students will be subjected to many tests throughout their academic and work careers that will determine advancement and be linked to life options. But emphasizing narrow test content so that students may pass a competency test and in turn signal that schools are accountable becomes a misrepresentation of the purposes of schooling and education.

The passing score on the competency test represents a minimum level of knowledge. Most students, it is reported, can and do pass competency tests and would have done so without state-mandated competency testing requirements. Many students consider the tests to be easy. For lower ability students and students with learning disabilities, however, the tests are formidable obstacles. Those students who fail them are denied high school diplomas, are stigmatized, may suffer psychological damage, and may find future educational opportunities restricted. Moreover, those students who must participate in remedial classes because of failing such tests may not only suffer the stigmatization of being in a special remedial class, but may also find their education in regular classes jeopardized. When students are pulled from regular classes during the school year to receive remediation, they miss the instruction in those classes and frequently fall behind in the regular classwork being covered. Thus, an unintended effect of the competency testing program is to place at greater risk those students who already experience school failure.

At another level, as an index of ability for college entry decisions, competency test data have little utility. Education officials hasten to point out that the competency tests are not sensitive enough to measure abilities for college work. As part of the overall effort to raise educational standards, however, some colleges now require additional high school course work, higher scores on the SAT and ACT, passage of a test to move from lower to upper division work, and for graduation. In part, these new emphases have added fuel to the uniform-high-school-curriculum fire.

Uniform high school curricula and increased requirements for college entry are not undesirable. The high school curriculum, however, should not become so rigid as to preclude attention to individual needs and goals. Nor should college entry requirements be so inflexible that other measures which may indicate potential for success are eliminated from consideration. It may be the case that the high schools attended by some students are unable to provide specified courses because of a lack of resources. In the event of this occurrence, students should not be penalized and denied college entry.

Whether increased high school or college entry requirements have improved the student pool is not clear in our data. Some college officials indicate that students now applying and being accepted at their institutions are brighter and more motivated than before. Other officials indicate that there has been no discernible difference in the skills and abilities of students they admit. What is at issue, then, may not be increased college entry requirements and a uniform high school curriculum, but the quality of the instruction students receive in a wide spectrum of courses. Not totally unrelated is the fact that school resources must be amply provided to ensure that the quality of teaching is consistently effective for all students.

Advantages of Competency Testing Programs

Competency testing programs, it is alleged, have generally defined a set of learning standards, aside from whether or not they are too narrow, and brought about a clearer sense of student and teacher school expectations. Students know what is to be learned and many take education more seriously. Because of competency testing programs a strong signal is being transmitted about what is to be taught by teachers and accomplished by students. This is viewed positively by parents and the community who now can gauge the success of the school and feel that the high school diploma represents the attainment of at least minimum skills in reading and mathematics. Of no small consequence, public confidence in the public schools is being restored (Salganik, 1985).

Disadvantages of Competency Testing Programs

Several disadvantages of competency testing programs are noted. First, the curriculum has become too focused and frequently has been narrowed to competency areas easily measured by the test. The tests exclude higher order thinking skills, creativity, speech, and skills in the affective domain. Second, the level at which passing the test is possible reflects minimum rather than maximum standards. These two disadvantages in turn precipitate two additional ones: the needs of exceptional kids are not addressed and bright, innovative teachers are constrained.

In another dimension in Louisiana the testing program is thought by some officials to cause competition between schools and school districts, thereby placing pressure on schools and teachers to increase the number of students passing the tests. Teaching to the test thus becomes a predictable consequence. There is a further problem of too much testing which results in student apathy toward test taking in general. Additionally, students may develop the false notion that the essence of schooling is testing; what's important to know is that which is included in the test. A further disadvantage of testing programs is the discrepancy that occurs when students pass the competency test but otherwise do poorly in their regular course work. Parents may feel that passing the competency test automatically signifies that their child is doing well in school. Many fail to make the distinction between the competency test grade and the report card grade. Some parents place too much emphasis on the test and too much confidence in the test score.

As a result of some of the disadvantages noted and others that shall become apparent, the Louisiana legislature, in its June 1986 legislative session, repealed the state's Basic Skills competency testing program, including funds for remediation. The problem perceived by the governor's office and the legislature was that the tests were not geared to the appropriate grade levels. The tests tested grade level skills that were lower than the grade in which students were enrolled. For example, fifth grade students were given a test that was more like third grade level rather than one that was at the fifth grade level. There was a further problem of excessive testing in the field. In some districts 20 days out of the regular school year were spent on testing. This occurred when school districts developed their own testing programs that were administered in addition to the state-required program. The new Louisiana tests will be criterion-referenced, set at grade levels and administered at grades 3, 5, 7 and 11. This new testing program will be fully funded by the state for the 1987 school year. (For a copy of the new legislation, Act 1324, see Appendix A.)

Effects of Competency Testing on Black Students

There is a general perception that black students in Louisiana and North Carolina public schools are performing better since the testing programs began than prior to testing implementation. In North Carolina more black students are finishing high school, reportedly with higher levels of skills than in the past. In Louisiana more black students are passing the basic skills tests in the lower grades. The school performance gap has narrowed somewhat between black and white students in these states, yet it continues to exist. Moreover, in Louisiana, North Carolina, and throughout the nation, black students are still underrepresented in gifted programs and in college preparatory curriculum tracks. For example, in 1980 black students were 84.4 percent of the total enrollment in the New Orleans public schools but only 26.4 percent of those in the gifted and talented programs. In contrast, white students were 11.7 percent of the total enrollment in the New Orleans public schools but constituted 70.1 percent of the gifted and talented programs (College Entrance Examination Board, 1985, p. 33).

It is also the case that the percentage of black students enrolled in college has declined. In 1975 college enrollment as a percentage of high school graduates was 32 percent for black students and 32.4 percent for white students. By 1980 corresponding figures were 27.8 percent black students, and 32 percent white students (College Entrance Examination Board, 1985, p. 12). Whereas the percentage of black students graduating from high school increased between 1975 and 1980, their college enrollment decreased during that time.

The reasons why black student enrollment in college has decreased since 1975 are not readily apparent in our data. However, the quality of education black students receive in high school, the lack of available financial assistance for college attendance, and an escalating high school dropout rate can be singled out as important considerations. As pointed out earlier, the percentage of black students in high school gifted and talented programs and their enrollment in college preparatory curriculum tracks is dramatically low. Further, the minimum competency testing movement has caused schools to concentrate their efforts on preparing students to pass such tests which omit the kinds of skills needed for college level work. College officials in this study were unequivocal in stating that minimum competency tests fail to discriminate along ability lines thought to be necessary for successful college work. Principals and superintendents point out that such tests do not focus on higher order thinking skills or creativity. Many students themselves feel that competency tests fail to challenge them, are too easy, and do little to motivate their teachers. In fact, some of our evidence supports the view that bright, innovative teachers are constrained by the use of competency tests. Additionally, the flexibility some schools need to meet student needs is suppressed by competency test and uniform curriculum requirements. To the extent that teachers teach to the test and the curriculum narrows because of competency testing programs, students experience a new form of inequity: they are denied the kind of education that will enable them to successfully climb the higher education ladder. Many black and poor students, in particular, are the victims of this new inequity because they must depend on the public schools to provide the formal education needed for economic and social mobility.

Financial assistance for college is also an obstacle for black students. As college costs have increased, financial assistance has become more difficult to obtain. While the most frequently reported source of financing college was money from parents and other relatives, only one-fifth of the students in this study can claim receiving such support, and most frequently those were white students. Many students thus rely on a variety of funding sources with most of them reporting that their employment while in college was an important source of funds. Black students tended to be employed in work study programs and white students in non-work study programs. Many black students also report receiving national direct student loans, Basic Educational Opportunity Grants, and College/University students loans. College attendance for many black students is predicated on an ability to find ample means of meeting the expenses involved. If students are unable to be selected for work study programs and student loan programs, then college attendance at four-year colleges or universities becomes an unrealistic option for them. The desire for additional education is thus in part met by community colleges which enroll a disproportionate percentage of black students relative to their percentage of college-age students. Community college drop out rates for black students are high and transfer rates into four-year colleges, low.

Across the nation the number of black student high school dropouts has increased in recent years. Whereas the overall percentage of black student high school dropouts declined from 25.9 percent in 1971 to 17.9 percent in 1981, among 14- to 15-year-old black students, it increased from 1.6 percent in 1971 to 2.98 percent in 1981 (College Entrance Examination Board, 1985, p. 12). The high school drop out rate among 18 and 19 year old black males in 1983 was 27.7 percent as compared with 14.1 percent for white males. Overall the 1983 dropout rate of black students between the ages of 14 to 34 years is 17 percent as compared with 11.6 percent for whites in the same age bracket (Grant and Snyder, 1986). In some large urban areas the percentages are much higher. Whether or not high school competency testing programs and new graduation requirements have contributed to the escalation in dropouts is not apparent from our data. Yet, we can speculate that the student apathy brought about by the competency testing program, as reported by some interviewees in this study, may be an early indicator of the likelihood of dropping out. Are students being "turned-off" and driven to dropping out because of an overemphasis on competency testing and teaching directed to such tests? Alternately, are students dropping out because they do not wish to meet the new requirements? These are important questions for future studies.

There are, of course, other factors that restrict college attendance for black students, but the effect of competency testing programs as described above, the lack of financial assistance, and increasing dropout rates must be considered as being among the more important ones.

In further examining the effect of competency testing on black students, it is important to note that passing a high school competency test is related to parental education. Students whose parents are poorly educated tend to fail more often than others. Parental occupation and family financial circumstances also show a relationship with passing the competency tests. Students from middle and upper socioeconomic (SES) backgrounds pass the competency tests more frequently than do those from lower SES backgrounds.

Passing the high school graduation competency test is not nearly as powerful an influence or predictor of attending a two- or four-year college as are family education and occupation variables, and clearly not as powerful in explaining educational and career choices as are type of high school attended, family background variables, and college background variables. Students generally have high levels of confidence about passing college graduation competency examinations, where required, and generally consider the high school test to be fair and needed, presumably as an indicator of minimum educational accomplishments. Students do not believe the tests cause them to study harder, or believe that the tests cause their teachers to have higher expectations. They agree that the tests cover material studied in school, but more students in North Carolina than students in Louisiana, and more black students than white students in both states consider the tests too easy. What emerges, then, is a set of perceptions both from education officials, as described earlier, and from students that calls into question the overall efficacy of competency testing programs. While there are some advantages to competency testing, as previously identified, there are more disadvantages. What, then, are policy implications that can be drawn from the findings of this study?

Policy Implications

The minimum competency testing and new standards movement has been a political response to what has been perceived as declining quality of education and a lack of school accountability. This emphasis has received the support of community members, parents, and educators, although many in this latter group recognize the disadvantages and limitations of the movement. The reliance on a single limited test score as being indicative of human potential and a barometer of school effectiveness fails to recognize the diversity of talent, skills, desires, and the many arenas of excellence that exist in the schools.

Competency testing and new curriculum standards, it has been argued, serve to raise student achievement, motivate student learning, and make teachers and schools more accountable. It is questionable whether these outcomes have been met or can be met through these means. What has been revealed in this study are perceptions that the curriculum has been narrowed, grade level minimum standards have become almost meaningless (as was apparently the case with the Louisiana Basic Skills testing program), teacher creativity is being stifled, student apathy is growing, and parents are placing an over-reliance on test scores without recognizing the limitations of such scores. Moreover, while the competency test performance of black students has improved in Louisiana and North Carolina, these students continue to fail the tests more frequently than white students. They are also less frequently enrolled in gifted and talented programs and college preparatory curriculum tracks. Given these circumstances, several policy implications are suggested.

Curriculum, Teacher Effectiveness, and Arbitrary Classroom Ability Grouping

Competency testing programs alone fail to motivate student achievement. Clearly, student performance in specified limited areas of mathematics and reading will increase, given clear objectives, drill and practice on the type of questions placed on a minimum competency test, and a curriculum geared to the test content. What should be desired for all students, however, is the development of a broad spectrum of skills, including higher order thinking, creativity, and social skills. Thus, the challenge for educators and others interested in education is to find ways to expand the curriculum and to increase teaching effectiveness. Excellent teaching and an exciting, vibrant curriculum are vital to stimulating student learning. Motivation for learning must be internalized by students. External pressure brought about through competency testing fails to cultivate a desire to learn, to grow, and to expand. The enhancement of student learning and performance will be stimulated when we ensure that the quality of teaching is excellent, the curriculum challenging, and the school environment supportive. Importantly, school programs must be available to all students. Arbitrary class ability grouping should be eliminated and students challenged intellectually throughout their school careers.

Role Models and Career and Educational Exploration

In many instances, black youngsters fail to recognize the relationship between educational achievement and economic and social mobility, or may believe that the doors of educational opportunity are closed to them. In addition, their academic and intellectual potentialities may go unrecognized in the schools. As a consequence, the talents and abilities of these youngsters are lost to society and to themselves in terms of personal fulfillment. It is vitally important that schools seek ways to assist students to recognize the linkage between educational attainment and life options. Role models and career and educational exploration are important in this regard.

Diagnostic Testing

Testing programs can, in fact, be quite useful if they are used to diagnose learning difficulties rather than to pass irreversible judgments on the placement of students in curriculum tracks, to determine grade promotion, or to decide whether a diploma should be issued. Every teacher should be able to diagnose student learning needs through a variety of techniques. Testing should be but one of these techniques. Performance testing, while useful in determining whether the student has mastered or understands a given body of knowledge, should not be construed solely as a test of the student. It also must be seen as a test of the teacher's effectiveness in assisting students to understand and to acquire knowledge.

College and University Research in Identifying and Nurturing Student Abilities

College and universities can perform a valuable service in this regard on at least two levels. First, through fresh and creative research they can assist in the development of techniques to identify the variety of talents youngsters possess. Second, they can develop programs with the schools that will assist in motivating students and in developing their academic skills. Too many black students are dropping out of high school, not entering four-year colleges and universities, and failing to achieve maximum academic success in school. To reverse this pattern, colleges and universities should become more actively involved in developing meaningful and measurable solutions.

Availability of School Programs to Meet Diverse Student Needs

Provide a uniform curriculum in the high schools and an equal education of a high quality will be ensured for all students, or so the argument goes. There is little disagreement that the schools should have a rigorous program of studies, but there is also considerable agreement that program flexibility must be maintained to meet diverse students' needs. The challenge to be met is to ensure that all schools have the human and fiscal resources necessary to implement curricular programs that are consistently high in quality and content in all schools and for all youngsters. An enriched curriculum should not be the private domain of middle to upper SES schools. Nor should selected students be designated as its beneficiaries. Black, Hispanic, other minority, rich, and poor students will thrive and grow given an enriched, high quality, well-taught curriculum. The resources must be made available to all schools attended by all groups to maintain program diversity and excellence.

Concluding Thought

The institutionalization of competency testing programs and higher graduation requirements, on the surface, satisfies those who seek to bring about greater school accountability. This goal is not completely bad. Yet, the accountability focus is somewhat displaced when the competency testing program shifts the blame from the schools to students. Accountability is needed. It should be focused, however, on the necessity of schools -- teachers, counselors, administrators, staff -- to educate all students, particularly black and other underrepresented minorities, at the highest education levels, to foster within them a sense of high self-esteem and self-worth, to recognize their enormous potential for academic growth, to treat them with respect, and to eliminate the insidious vestiges of racism and sexism. If competency testing programs within this context can become means rather than ends, then there is a place for them. If not, they should be eliminated.

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Appendix A

State Testing Legislation

Louisiana
North Carolina

(The condition and length of the legislation did not permit reproduction; however, a copy of Appendix A may be obtained by contacting the Southern Education Foundation.)

Appendix B

Study Sites

Letters to presidents inviting institutional participation
Responses from university presidents
List of site coordinators

(available upon request from the Southern Education Foundation)

Appendix C

Questionnaire

Cover letters from
  A - Institution
  B - Project Director

Follow-up letter to non-respondents

(available upon request from the Southern Education Foundation)

Appendix D

Interview Protocols

- College officials
- High school principals
- Superintendents and state education officials

College Official Interview Agenda

1. Does your college/university have minimum competency testing (MCT) requirements for entry (admission)?
    a) What are they? Describe type, passing score, etc.
    b) How do you feel about the appropriateness of these requirements?
    c) What do you consider to be the advantages of MCT?
    d) What do you consider to be the disadvantages of MCT?
    e) Do you believe MCT measures what is important to know and study?
2. Does your college/university have a proficiency test requirement for advancement from lower to upper division or for graduation?
    a) If yes, what are the requirements?
    (try to get printed official school policy)
    b) Do you think they encourage students to perform better?
    c) What happens to students who fail the test?
    d) What college resources are allocated to individuals who fail?
    (e.g., staff, special classes, tutoring)
    e) Have retention/graduation rates been affected by tests? How?
3. Do you feel that colleges and universities should work with secondary (high school) schools to ensure that students more successfully demonstrate basic skills and knowledge included in required graduation and college entry tests? How?

    Probe -> Most effective way to work with black students?
4. Do you feel there should be a uniform high school curriculum to ensure that students have been exposed to test requirements?

    Probe -> Why? Why not?
5. Do you feel there should be required satisfactory completion of high school subjects for college entry? Why? Why not? Which subjects?
6. What educational or employment options should be available for students who fail to meet required subjects standards?

School Principal Interview

1. Is there a minimum competency testing program in your school?
2. How do you feel about the use of minimum competency testing?
3. Do these tests cause students to study harder?
4. Should the competency test be a major high school graduation requirement?
5. What happens to students who fail graduation or other required tests?
6. Should local colleges/universities work with schools to assist students to pass competency tests?

   Probe -> How?

7. Should there be a uniform high school curriculum because of the competency test requirement?

   Probe -> Why?

8. Do teachers teach to the competency tests?
9. What responsibilities will teachers assume (be held accountable for) in the competency testing program?
10. How are MCT results used (i.e., diagnosis, remediation, course grading, recommendations for college attendance, grade retentions, etc.)?
11. How are MCT results transmitted to teachers, parents, students, other educational agencies, e.g., colleges?
12. What are the consequences of not passing the MCT (H.S. graduation proficiency test) on student educational and employment opportunities?
13. What is the policy on retaking the MCT if failed initially?
14. Are funds allocated by the local school district, state department of education, or both for remediation courses, teachers, or materials to assist students who fail the MCT?
15. Have you noticed any change in student or teacher attitudes toward
    a) school and education because of MCT requirements?
    b) student attendance?

   Probe -> What changes?

Superintendents and State Education Officials

INTERVIEW AGENDA

Name of Respondent ________________________________

Position of Respondent ____

A. Feelings about competency exam:

1. Did you participate in the development of the competency examination passage of which is required for high school graduation?

   Probe -> If yes, what was the extent and nature of involvement?

2. How was the examination validated?

3. Are you satisfied with the validity of the examination?

   Probe -> Why or why not?

4. Are you satisfied with how the examination is being used in the schools (colleges)?

   Probe -> Why or why not?

5. What do you feel are the advantages of the competency examination?

6. What do you feel are the disadvantages of the competency examination?

7. What has been the effect of competency examination policy on teachers? staff? students? parents? the community?

8. Do you believe the test is measuring what is important for students to know?

   Probe -> What, if anything, is it not measuring?

9. Are most of the teaching energy and school (college) resources directed to test taking and teaching to what's included in the test?

10. How much remediation should be given to students who fail the test initially?

    Probe -> Is cost a consideration?

11. What responsibility should be accepted by the local school when the student fails the competency test?

    Probe -> Specifically who or what in the school?

12. What should be done to improve the instruction received by students who fail the test?

13. Why do you feel students fail the test?

14. Do you feel that colleges and universities can or should work cooperatively with secondary schools to ensure that students more successfully acquire the basic skills and knowledge specified in required graduation and college entry tests?

    Probe -> If yes, in what ways do you believe such cooperation will be most effective for Black students?

    Probe -> If no, why not?

15. How can colleges and universities and secondary schools work cooperatively to improve the transition of Black students from high school to college?

16. Several national commissions, study groups, state officials, citizens, and educators in this state and outside of it are recommending that a uniform curriculum or a specified list of subjects be completed by students while in high school.

    a) Do you feel that a list of required subjects should be mandated as a requirement for high school graduation?

       Probe -> Why or why not?

b) Do you feel that a list of required subjects should be mandated as a requirement for entry into public colleges and universities?

Probe -> Why or why not?

c) Should students who do not complete or who are not registered for all subjects or courses on a required high school list be denied the opportunity to select colleges and programs of their choice using other criteria?

Probe -> Why or why not?

d) What college programs or college and university options should be provided for students who do not complete all required courses because they were not registered for them?

f) Should selection of a course of study or undergraduate major be predicated on completion of a list of required high school courses?

g) Do you feel that completion of required high school courses will have an adverse effect on Black students?

Probe -> Why or why not?

Appendix E

Tables Showing the Standardized Test Taking Distribution of Louisiana and North Carolina College Student Samples

Tables Pertaining to:
- High school competency graduation tests
- College competency tests

TABLE 6.1

Distribution of Students Graduating from High Schools
Inside and Outside Louisiana Taking the ACT in 12th Grade

	Louisiana	Outside	Row Total
Yes	248 (70.7%)	43 (30.7%)	121 (59.3%)
No	103 (29.3%)	97 (69.3%)	200 (40.7%)
Column Total	351 (71.5%)	140 (28.5%)	491 (100.0%)

N.S.

TABLE 6.2

Distribution of Students Graduating from High Schools
Inside and Outside Louisiana Taking the ACT in 11th Grade

	Louisiana	Outside	Row Total
Yes	161 (47.1%)	41 (29.3%)	202 (41.9%)
No	181 (52.9%)	99 (70.7%)	280 (58.1%)
Column Total	342 (71.0%)	140 (29.0%)	482 (100.0%)

$X^2 = 12.91$, df = 1, p = 0.0003

TABLE 6.3

Distribution of Students Graduating from High Schools Inside and Outside Louisiana Taking the SAT, College Board, or PSAT in 11th Grade

	Louisiana	Outside	Row Total
Yes	118 (34.4%)	63 (45.0%)	181 (37.5%)
No	225 (65.6%)	77 (55.0%)	302 (62.5%)
Column Total	343 (71.0%)	140 (29.0%)	483 (100.0%)

$X^2 = 4.77$, df = 1, p = 0.0290

TABLE 6.4

Distribution of Students Graduating from High Schools Inside and Outside Louisiana Taking the Armed Services Vocational Battery Test in 10th Grade

	Louisiana	Outside	Row Total
Yes	39 (11.3%)	4 (2.9%)	43 (8.9%)
No	306 (88.7%)	136 (97.1%)	442 (91.1%)
Column Total	345 (71.1%)	140 (28.9%)	485 (100.0%)

$X^2 = 7.78$, df = 1, p = 0.0053

TABLE 6.5

Distribution of Students Graduating from High Schools
Inside and Outside Louisiana Taking the
Armed Services Battery in 11th Grade

	Louisiana	Outside	Row Total
Yes	80 (22.9%)	13 (9.4%)	93 (19.1%)
No	269 (77.1%)	126 (90.6%)	395 (80.9%)
Column Total	349 (71.5%)	139 (28.5%)	488 (100.0%)

$X^2 = 11.87$, df = 1, p = 0.0006

TABLE 6.6

Distribution of Students Graduating from High Schools
Inside and Outside Louisiana Taking the SAT,
College Board, or PSAT in 12th Grade

	Louisiana	Outside	Row Total
Yes	89 (26.2%)	61 (43.6%)	150 (31.3%)
No	251 (73.8%)	79 (56.4%)	330 (68.8%)
Column Total	340 (70.8%)	140 (29.2%)	480 (100.0%)

$X^2 = 13.97$, df = 1, p = 0.0002

TABLE 6.7

Distribution of Louisiana College Students Taking the SAT, College Board, or PSAT in 11th Grade of High School by Status Group

	Black Male	Black Female	White Male	White Female	Row Total
Yes	38 (36.9%)	76 (34.2%)	15 (34.1%)	34 (54.8%)	163 (37.8%)
No	65 (63.1%)	146 (65.8%)	29 (65.9%)	28 (45.2%)	268 (62.2%)
Column Total	103 (23.9%)	222 (51.5%)	44 (10.2%)	62 (14.4%)	431 (100.0%)

$X^2 = 9.15$, df = 3, p = 0.0274

TABLE 6.8

Distribution of Louisiana College Students Taking the ACT in 11th Grade of High School by Status Group

	Black Male	Black Female	White Male	White Female	Row Total
Yes	48 (45.3%)	83 (37.9%)	14 (31.8%)	35 (56.5%)	180 (41.8%)
No	58 (54.7%)	136 (62.1%)	30 (68.2%)	27 (43.5%)	251 (58.2%)
Column Total	106 (24.6%)	219 (50.8%)	44 (10.2%)	62 (14.4%)	431 (100.0%)

$X^2 = 9.17$, df = 3, p = 0.0271

TABLE 6.9

Distribution of Louisiana College Students Taking the Armed Services Vocational Battery in the 11th Grade of High School by Status Group

	Black Male	Black Female	White Male	White Female	Row Total
Yes	28 (26.7%)	44 (19.6%)	3 (6.8%)	10 (16.1%)	85 (19.5%)
No	77 (73.3%)	181 (80.4%)	41 (93.2%)	52 (83.9%)	351 (80.5%)
Column Total	105 (24.1%)	225 (51.6%)	44 (10.1%)	62 (14.2%)	436 (100.0%)

$X^2 = 8.39$, df = 3, p = 0.0385

TABLE 6.10

Distribution of Louisiana College Students Taking the SAT, College Board, or PSAT in 12th Grade of High School by Status Group

	Black Male	Black Female	White Male	White Female	Row Total
Yes	26 (25.0%)	63 (28.9%)	16 (35.6%)	25 (41.0%)	130 (30.4%)
No	78 (75.0%)	155 (71.1%)	29 (64.4%)	36 (59.0%)	298 (69.6%)
Column Total	104 (24.3%)	155 (50.9%)	45 (10.5%)	61 (14.3%)	428 (100.0%)

N.S.

TABLE 6.11

Distribution of Louisiana College Students Taking the ACT in 12th Grade of High School by Status Group

	Black Male	Black Female	White Male	White Female	Row Total
Yes	64 (59.3%)	149 (66.2%)	15 (33.3%)	35 (56.5%)	263 (59.8%)
No	44 (40.7%)	76 (33.8%)	30 (66.7%)	27 (43.5%)	177 (40.2%)
Column Total	108 (24.5%)	225 (51.1%)	45 (10.2%)	62 (14.1%)	440 (100.0%)

$X^2 = 17.27$, df = 3, p = 0.0006

TABLE 6.12

Distribution of Louisiana College Students Taking the Armed Services Vocational Battery in 12th Grade of High School by Status Group

	Black Male	Black Female	White Male	White Female	Row Total
Yes	37 (33.9%)	55 (25.0%)	8 (18.2%)	13 (21.0%)	113 (26.0%)
No	72 (66.1%)	165 (75.0%)	36 (81.8%)	49 (79.0%)	322 (74.0%)
Column Total	109 (25.1%)	220 (50.6%)	44 (10.1%)	62 (14.3%)	435 (100.0%)

N.S.

TABLE 6.13

Distribution of North Carolina College Students Taking the SAT, College Board, or PSAT in 11th Grade of High School by Status Group

	Black Male	Black Female	White Male	White Female	Row Total
Yes	62 (51.2%)	85 (58.6%)	53 (86.9%)	63 (85.1%)	263 (65.6%)
No	59 (48.8%)	60 (41.4%)	8 (13.1%)	11 (14.9%)	138 (34.4%)
Column Total	121 (30.2%)	145 (36.2%)	61 (15.2%)	74 (18.5%)	401 (100.0%)

N.S.

TABLE 6.14

Distribution of North Carolina College Students Taking the SAT, College Board, or PSAT in 12th Grade of High School by Status Group

	Black Male	Black Female	White Male	White Female	Row Total
Yes	80 (66.7%)	101 (69.7%)	46 (75.4%)	62 (83.8%)	289 (72.3%)
No	40 (33.3%)	43 (29.7%)	15 (24.6%)	12 (16.2%)	110 (27.5%)
Don't Know		1 (0.7%)			1 (0.3%)
Column Total	120 (30.0%)	145 (36.3%)	61 (15.3%)	74 (18.5%)	400 (100.0%)

N.S.

TABLE 6.15

Distribution of Students Graduating from High Schools Inside and Outside Louisiana Taking a Competency Graduation Test

	Louisiana	Outside	Row Total
Yes	29 (8.2%)	36 (25.7%)	65 (13.1%)
No	175 (49.3%)	63 (45.0%)	238 (48.1%)
No Test Offered	151 (42.5%)	41 (29.3%)	192 (38.8%)
Column Total	355 (71.7%)	140 (28.3%)	495 (100.0%)

N.S.

TABLE 6.16

Distribution of Grade Levels at Which a Competency Graudation Test was Taken for Students Graduating from High Schools Inside and Outside Louisiana

	Louisiana	Outside	Row Total
9th		2 (5.6%)	2 (3.2%)
10th	4 (14.8%)	8 (22.2%)	12 (19.0%)
11th	7 (25.9%)	11 (30.6%)	18 (28.6%)
12th	15 (55.6%)	10 (27.8%)	25 (39.7%)
All Grades	1 (3.7%)	3 (8.3%)	4 (6.3%)
9 and 11		1 (2.8%)	1 (1.6%)
10 and 11		1 (2.8%)	1 (1.6%)
Column Total	27 (42.9%)	36 (57.1%)	63 (100.0%)

N.S.

TABLE 6.17

Distribution of Louisiana Students Taking a High School Competency Graduation Test by Status Group

	Black Male	Black Female	White Male	White Female	Row Total
Yes	16 (14.8%)	26 (11.5%)	9 (19.6%)	7 (11.5%)	58 (13.2%)
No	55 (50.9%)	112 (49.6%)	19 (41.3%)	21 (34.4%)	207 (46.9%)
No Test Offered	37 (34.3%)	88 (38.9%)	18 (39.1%)	33 (54.1%)	176 (39.9%)
Column Total	108 (24.5%)	226 (51.2%)	46 (10.4%)	61 (13.8%)	441 (100.0%)

N.S.

TABLE 6.18

Distribution of the Grade Levels at Which Louisiana Students Took a High School Competency Graduation Test by Status Group

	Black Male	Black Female	White Male	White Female	Row Total
9th		1 (3.7%)			1 (1.7%)
10th	2 (13.3%)	5 (18.5%)	3 (33.3%)	2 (28.6%)	12 (20.7%)
11th	5 (33.3%)	7 (25.9%)	2 (22.2%)	2 (28.6%)	16 (27.6%)
12th	6 (40.0%)	12 (44.4%)	4 (44.4%)	2 (28.6%)	24 (41.4%)
All Grades	1 (6.7%)	2 (7.4%)			3 (5.2%)
9 and 11				1 (14.3%)	1 (1.7%)
10 and 11	1 (6.7%)				1 (1.7%)
Column Total	15 (25.9%)	27 (46.6%)	9 (15.5%)	7 (12.1%)	58 (100.0%)

N.S.

TABLE 6.19

Distribution of Students Graduating from High Schools Inside and Outside North Carolina Taking a Competency Graduation Test

	N. Carolina	Outside	Row Total
Yes	160 (76.9%)	90 (42.1%)	250 (59.2%)
No	31 (14.9%)	68 (31.8%)	99 (23.5%)
No Test Offered	17 (8.2%)	56 (26.2%)	73 (17.3%)
Column Total	208 (49.3%)	214 (50.7%)	422 (100.0%)

N.S.

TABLE 6.20

Distribution of North Carolina Students Taking a High School Competency Graduation Test by Status Group

	Black Male	Black Female	White Male	White Female	Row Total
Yes	79 (64.8%)	96 (65.3%)	30 (48.4%)	35 (47.3%)	240 (59.3%)
No	28 (523.0%)	29 (19.7%)	15 (24.2%)	23 (31.1%)	95 (23.5%)
No Test Offered	15 (12.3%)	22 (15.0%)	17 (27.4%)	16 (21.6%)	70 (17.3%)
Column Total	122 (30.1%)	147 (36.3%)	62 (15.3%)	74 (18.3%)	405 (100.0%)

$X^2 = 13.99$, df = 6, p = 0.03

TABLE 6.21

Distribution of the Grade Levels at Which a Competency Graduation Test was Taken for Students Graduating from High Schools Inside and Outside North Carolina

	N. Carolina	Outside	Row Total
9th	1 (.6%)	9 (10.3%)	10 (4.0%)
10th	15 (9.4%)	17 (19.5%)	32 (13.0%)
11th	109 (68.1%)	26 (29.9%)	135 (54.7%)
12th	28 (17.5%)	22 (25.3%)	50 (20.2%)
All Grades	1 (.6%)	6 (6.9%)	7 (2.8%)
9 and 10		1 (1.1%)	1 (.4%)
9 and 12	1 (.6%)	4 (4.6%)	5 (2.0%)
9 and 11	4 (2.5%)	2 (2.3%)	6 (2.4%)
10 and 11	1 (.6%)		1 (.4%)
Column Total	160 (64.8%)	87 (35.2%)	247 (100.0%)

N.S.

TABLE 6.22

Distribution of the Grade Levels at Which North Carolina Students Took a High School Competency Graduation Test by Status Group

	Black Male	Black Female	White Male	White Female	Row Total
9th	3 (3.8%)	5 (5.2%)	1 (3.4%)	1 (2.9%)	10 (4.2%)
10th	8 (10.3%)	14 (114.6%)	2 (6.9%)	6 (17.6%)	30 (12.7%)
11th	43 (55.1%)	52 (54.2%)	17 (58.6%)	21 (61.8%)	133 (56.1%)
12th	17 (21.8%)	19 (19.8%)	9 (31.0%)	3 (8.8%)	48 (20.3%)
All Grades	4 (5.1%)	1 (1.0%)			5 (2.1%)
9 and 10		1 (1.0%)			1 (.4%)
9 and 12		3 (3.1%)			3 (1.3%)
9 and 11	2 (2.6%)	1 (1.0%)		3 (8.8%)	6 (2.5%)
10 and 11	1 (1.3%)				1 (.4%)
Column Total	78 (32.9%)	96 (40.5%)	29 (12.2%)	34 (14.3%)	237 (100.0%)

N.S.

TABLE 6.23

Distribution of Number Times Before Passing Competency Graduation Test for Graduates of High School Inside and Outside North Carolina

	N. Carolina	Outside	Row Total
1st time	154 (96.3%)	79 (88.8%)	233 (93.6%)
2nd time	5 (3.1%)	10 (11.2%)	15 (6.0%)
3rd time	1 (.6%)		1 (.4%)
Column Total	160 (64.3%)	89 (35.7%)	249 (100.0%)

N.S.

TABLE 6.24

Distribution of Number Times Before Passing Competency Graduation Test for North Carolina College Students by Status Group

	Black Male	Black Female	White Male	White Female	Row Total
1st time	68 (87.2%)	91 (94.8%)	30 (100.0%)	35 (100.0%)	240 (93.7%)
2nd time	9 (11.5%)	5 (5.2%)			14 (5.9%)
3rd time	1 (1.3%)				1 (.4%)
Column Total	78 (32.6%)	96 (40.2%)	30 (12.6%)	35 (14.6%)	239 (100.0%)

N.S.

TABLE 6.25

Agreement of Students Graduating from High Schools Inside and Outside Louisiana on the Statement that Competency Tests are "Too Easy"

	Louisiana	Outside	Row Total
Agree	5 (19.2%)	9 (29.0%)	14 (24.6%)
Disagree	20 (76.9%)	14 (45.2%)	34 (59.6%)
Not sure	1 (3.8%)	8 (25.8%)	9 (15.8%)
Column Total	26 (45.6%)	31 (54.4%)	57 (100.0%)

$X^2 = 7.26$, df = 2, p = 0.03

TABLE 6.26

Agreement of Students Graduating from High Schools Inside and Outside Louisiana on the Statement that Competency Tests "Cause Students to Change Their Course Selections"

	Louisiana	Outside	Row Total
Agree	6 (23.1%)	1 (3.1%)	7 (12.1%)
Disagree	14 (53.8%)	18 (56.3%)	32 (59.2%)
Not sure	6 (23.1%)	13 (40.6%)	19 (32.8%)
Column Total	26 (44.8%)	32 (55.2%)	58 (100.0%)

$X^2 = 6.09$, df = 2, p = 0.0475

TABLE 6.27

Agreement of Louisiana College Students by Status Group on Whether Competency Tests are "Fair"

	Black Male	Black Female	White Male	White Female	Row Total
Agree	8 (61.5%)	18 (69.2%)	7 (87.5%)	6 (100.0%)	39 (73.6%)
Disagree	3 (23.1%)	4 (15.4%)	1 (12.5%)		8 (15.1%)
Not sure	2 (15.4%)	4 (15.4%)			6 (11.3%)
Column Total	13 (24.5%)	26 (49.1%)	8 (15.1%)	6 (11.3%)	53 (100.0%)

N.S.

TABLE 6.28

Agreement of Louisiana College Students by Status Group on Whether Competency Tests are "Needed"

	Black Male	Black Female	White Male	White Female	Row Total
Agree	12 (85.7%)	18 (64.3%)	7 (87.5%)	5 (71.4%)	42 (73.7%)
Disagree	2 (14.3%)	4 (14.3%)	1 (12.5%)	1 (14.3%)	8 (14.0%)
Not sure		6 (21.4%)		1 (14.3%)	7 (12.3%)
Column Total	14 (24.6%)	28 (49.1%)	8 (14.0%)	7 (12.3%)	57 (100.0%)

N.S.

TABLE 6.29

Agreement of Louisiana College Students by Status Group on Whether Competency Tests Cover Material Studied in School

	Black Male	Black Female	White Male	White Female	Row Total
Agree	9 (69.2%)	15 (53.6%)	3 (37.5%)	4 (66.7%)	31 (56.4%)
Disagree	1 (7.7%)	7 (25.0%)	2 (25.0%)	2 (33.3%)	12 (21.8%)
Not sure	3 (23.1%)	6 (21.4%)	3 (37.5%)		12 (21.8%)
Column Total	13 (23.6%)	28 (50.9%)	8 (14.5%)	6 (10.9%)	55 (100.0%)

N.S.

TABLE 6.30

Agreement of Louisiana College Students by Status Group on Whether Competency Tests Cause Students to Study Harder

	Black Male	Black Female	White Male	White Female	Row Total
Agree	7 (50.0%)	11 (40.7%)	2 (25.0%)	2 (33.3%)	22 (40.0%)
Disagree	5 (35.7%)	11 (40.7%)	6 (75.0%)	4 (66.7%)	26 (47.3%)
Not sure	2 (14.3%)	5 (18.5%)			7 (12.7%)
Column Total	14 (25.5%)	27 (49.1%)	8 (14.5%)	6 (10.9%)	55 (100.0%)

N.S.

TABLE 6.31

Agreement of Louisiana College Students by Status Group on Whether Competency Tests are Too Easy

	Black Male	Black Female	White Male	White Female	Row Total
Agree	2 (16.7%)	7 (25.9%)	3 (37.5%)	2 (33.3%)	14 (26.4%)
Disagree	9 (75.0%)	18 (66.7%)	2 (25.0%)	2 (33.3%)	31 (58.5%)
Not sure	1 (8.3%)	2 (7.4%)	3 (37.5%)	2 (33.3%)	8 (15.1%)
Column Total	12 (22.6%)	27 (50.9%)	8 (15.1%)	6 (11.3%)	53 (100.0%)

N.S.

TABLE 6.32

Agreement of Louisiana College Students by Status Group on Whether Competency Tests Cause Teachers to Have Higher Performance Standards for Students

	Black Male	Black Female	White Male	White Female	Row Total
Agree	8 (61.5%)	10 (37.0%)	2 (25.0%)	3 (50.0%)	23 (42.6%)
Disagree	4 (30.8%)	12 (44.4%)	3 (37.5%)	3 (50.0%)	22 (40.7%)
Not sure	1 (7.7%)	5 (18.5%)	3 (37.5%)		9 (16.7%)
Column Total	13 (24.1%)	27 (50.0%)	8 (14.8%)	6 (11.1%)	54 (100.0%)

N.S.

TABLE 6.33

Agreement of Louisiana College Students by Status Group on Whether Competency Tests Cause Students to Change Course Selections

	Black Male	Black Female	White Male	White Female	Row Total
Agree		5 (18.5%)		2 (33.3%)	7 (13.0%)
Disagree	10 (76.9%)	15 (55.6%)	3 (37.5%)	4 (66.7%)	32 (59.3%)
Not sure	3 (23.1%)	7 (25.9%)	5 (62.5%)		15 (27.8%)
Column Total	13 (24.1%)	27 (50.0%)	8 (14.8%)	6 (11.1%)	54 (100.0%)

N.S.

TABLE 6.34

Distribution of Louisiana College Students Required to Take a General College Test Before Moving into Upper Division Work by Status Group

	Black Male	Black Female	White Male	White Female	Row Total
Yes	26 (23.0%)	66 (28.4%)	3 (7.3%)	7 (10.9%)	102 (22.7%)
No	52 (46.0%)	109 (47.0%)	24 (58.5%)	31 (48.4%)	216 (48.0%)
Don't know	35 (31.0%)	57 (24.6%)	14 (34.1%)	26 (40.6%)	132 (29.3%)
Column Total	113 (25.1%)	232 (51.6%)	41 (9.1%)	64 (14.2%)	450 (100.0%)

$X^2 = 27.43$, df = 9, p = 0.0012

TABLE 6.35

Distribution of Louisiana College Students Expected to Pass a General Examination Before Graduating by Status Group

	Black Male	Black Female	White Male	White Female	Row Total
Yes	66 (25.95%)	124 (52.8%)	16 (37.2%)	21 (32.8%)	227 (50.1%)
No	17 (15.3%)	57 (24.3%)	17 (39.5%)	20 (31.3%)	111 (24.5%)
Don't know	28 (25.2%)	54 (23.0%)	10 (23.3%)	23 (35.9%)	115 (25.4%)
Column Total	111 (24.5%)	235 (51.9%)	43 (9.5%)	64 (14.1%)	453 (100.0%)

$X^2 = 19.92$, df = 6, $p = 0.0029$

TABLE 6.36

Agreement of Students Graduating from High Schools Inside and Outside North Carolina that High School Graduation Competency Tests are Fair

	N. Carolina	Outside	Row Total
Agree	122 (83.0%)	55 (70.5%)	177 (78.7%)
Disagree	14 (9.5%)	11 (14.1%)	25 (11.1%)
Not sure	11 (7.5%)	12 (15.4%)	23 (10.2%)
Column Total	147 (65.3%)	78 (34.7%)	225 (100.0%)

N.S.

TABLE 6.37

Agreement of Students Graduating from High Schools Inside and Outside North Carolina that High School Graduation Competency Tests are Needed

	N. Carolina	Outside	Row Total
Agree	138 (90.2%)	68 (82.9%)	206 (87.7%)
Disagree	4 (2.6%)	9 (11.0%)	13 (5.5%)
Not sure	11 (7.2%)	5 (6.1%)	16 (6.8%)
Column Total	153 (65.1%)	82 (34.9%)	235 (100.0%)

$X^2 = 7.16$, df = 2, p = 0.03

TABLE 6.38

Agreement of Students Graduating from High Schools Inside and Outside North Carolina that High School Graduation Competency Tests Cover Material Studied in School

	N. Carolina	Outside	Row Total
Agree	102 (69.9%)	45 (60.0%)	147 (66.5%)
Disagree	22 (15.1%)	20 (26.7%)	42 (19.0%)
Not sure	22 (15.1%)	10 (13.3%)	32 (14.5%)
Column Total	146 (66.1%)	75 (33.9%)	221 (100.0%)

N.S.

TABLE 6.39

Agreement of Students Graduating from High Schools Inside and Outside North Carolina that High School Graduation Competency Tests Make Students Study Harder

	N. Carolina	Outside	Row Total
Agree	29 (19.9%)	16 (20.5%)	45 (20.1%)
Disagree	92 (63.0%)	49 (62.8%)	141 (62.9%)
Not sure	25 (17.1%)	13 (16.7%)	38 (17.0%)
Column Total	146 (65.2%)	78 (34.8%)	224 (100.0%)

N.S.

TABLE 6.40

Agreement of Students Graduating from High Schools Inside and Outside North Carolina that High School Graduation Competency Tests are Too Easy

	N. Carolina	Outside	Row Total
Agree	77 (51.7%)	30 (37.5%)	107 (46.7%)
Disagree	55 (36.9%)	35 (43.8%)	90 (39.3%)
Not sure	17 (11.4%)	15 (18.8%)	32 (14.0%)
Column Total	149 (65.1%)	80 (34.9%)	229 (100.0%)

N.S.

TABLE 6.41

Agreement of Students Graduating from High Schools Inside and Outside North Carolina that High School Graduation Competency Tests Cause Teachers to Have Higher Performance Standards for Students

	N. Carolina	Outside	Row Total
Agree	43 (29.7%)	21 (26.9%)	64 (28.7%)
Disagree	69 (47.6%)	31 (39.7%)	100 (44.8%)
Not sure	33 (22.8%)	26 (33.3%)	59 (26.5%)
Column Total	145 (65.0%)	78 (35.0%)	223 (100.0%)

N.S.

TABLE 6.42

Agreement of Students Graduating from High Schools Inside and Outside North Carolina that High School Graduation Competency Tests Cause Students to Change Course Selections

	N. Carolina	Outside	Row Total
Agree	18 (12.4%)	9 (12.0%)	27 (12.3%)
Disagree	96 (66.2%)	42 (56.0%)	138 (62.7%)
Not sure	31 (21.4%)	24 (32.0%)	55 (25.0%)
Column Total	145 (65.9%)	75 (34.1%)	220 (100.0%)

N.S.

TABLE 6.43

Agreement of North Carolina College Students by Status Group on Whether Competency Tests are Fair

	Black Male	Black Female	White Male	White Female	Row Total
Agree	50 (78.1%)	69 (77.5%)	25 (86.2%)	28 (77.8%)	172 (78.9%)
Disagree	8 (12.5%)	11 (12.4%)	2 (6.9%)	3 (8.3%)	24 (11.0%)
Not sure	6 (9.4%)	9 (10.1%)	2 (6.9%)	5 (13.9%)	22 (10.1%)
Column Total	64 (29.4%)	89 (40.8%)	29 (13.3%)	36 (16.5%)	218 (100.0%)

N.S.

TABLE 6.44

Agreement of North Carolina College Students by Status Group on Whether Competency Tests are Needed

	Black Male	Black Female	White Male	White Female	Row Total
Agree	58 (85.3%)	83 (87.4%)	26 (89.7%)	35 (97.2%)	202 (88.6%)
Disagree	5 (7.4%)	4 (4.2%)	1 (3.4%)		10 (4.4%)
Not sure	5 (7.4%)	8 (8.4%)	2 (6.9%)	1 (2.8%)	16 (7.0%)
Column Total	68 (29.8%)	95 (41.7%)	29 (12.7%)	36 (15.8%)	228 (100.0%)

N.S.

TABLE 6.45

Agreement of North Carolina College Students by Status Group on Whether Competency Tests Cover Material Studied in School

	Black Male	Black Female	White Male	White Female	Row Total
Agree	42 (70.0%)	60 (68.2%)	19 (65.5%)	19 (52.8%)	140 (65.7%)
Disagree	11 (18.3%)	17 (19.3%)	4 (13.8%)	10 (27.8%)	42 (19.7%)
Not sure	7 (11.7%)	11 (12.5%)	6 (20.7%)	7 (19.4%)	31 (14.6%)
Column Total	60 (28.2%)	88 (41.3%)	29 (13.6%)	36 (16.9%)	213 (100.0%)

N.S.

TABLE 6.46

Agreement of North Carolina College Students by Status Group on Whether Competency Tests Cause Students to Study Harder

	Black Male	Black Female	White Male	White Female	Row Total
Agree	25 (40.3%)	15 (16.9%)	2 (6.7%)	1 (2.8%)	43 (19.8%)
Disagree	28 (45.2%)	58 (65.2%)	25 (83.3%)	28 (77.8%)	139 (64.1%)
Not sure	9 (14.5%)	16 (18.0%)	3 (10.0%)	7 (19.4%)	35 (16.1%)
Column Total	62 (28.6%)	89 (41.0%)	30 (13.8%)	36 (16.6%)	217 (100.0%)

N.S.

TABLE 6.47

Agreement of North Carolina College Students by Status Group on Whether Competency Tests are Too Easy

	Black Male	Black Female	White Male	White Female	Row Total
Agree	25 (39.1%)	30 (33.7%)	26 (86.7%)	25 (67.6%)	106 (48.2%)
Disagree	29 (45.3%)	48 (53.9%)	1 (3.3%)	6 (16.2%)	84 (38.2%)
Not sure	10 (15.6%)	11 (12.4%)	3 (10.0%)	6 (16.2%)	30 (13.6%)
Column Total	64 (29.1%)	89 (40.5%)	30 (13.6%)	37 (16.8%)	220 (100.0%)

N.S.

TABLE 6.48

Agreement of North Carolina College Students by Status Group on Whether Competency Tests Cause Teachers to Have Higher Performance Standards for Students

	Black Male	Black Female	White Male	White Female	Row Total
Agree	25 (40.3%)	25 (28.7%)	2 (6.9%)	9 (24.3%)	61 (28.4%)
Disagree	16 (25.8%)	38 (43.7%)	22 (75.9%)	22 (59.5%)	98 (45.6%)
Not sure	21 (33.9%)	24 (27.6%)	5 (17.2%)	6 (16.2%)	56 (26.0%)
Column Total	62 (28.8%)	87 (40.5%)	29 (13.5%)	37 (17.2%)	215 (100.0%)

$X^2 = 24.61$, df = 6, $p = 0.0004$

TABLE 6.49

Agreement of North Carolina College Students by Status Group on Whether Competency Tests Cause Students to Change Course Selections

	Black Male	Black Female	White Male	White Female	Row Total
Agree	9 (15.0%)	13 (14.9%)	2 (6.9%)	2 (5.6%)	26 (12.3%)
Disagree	31 (51.7%)	52 (59.8%)	26 (89.7%)	26 (72.2%)	135 (63.7%)
Not sure	20 (33.3%)	22 (25.3%)	1 (3.4%)	8 (22.2%)	51 (24.1%)
Column Total	60 (28.3%)	87 (41.0%)	29 (13.7%)	36 (17.0%)	212 (100.0%)

N.S.

TABLE 6.50

Distribution of North Carolina College Students Required to Take a General College Test Before Moving into Upper Division Work by Status Group

	Black Male	Black Female	White Male	White Female	Row Total
Yes	32 (26.7%)	27 (18.6%)	3 (4.9%)	5 (6.6%)	67 (16.7%)
No	58 (48.3%)	75 (51.7%)	55 (90.2%)	54 (71.1%)	242 (60.2%)
Don't Know	30 (25.0%)	43 (29.7%)	3 (4.9%)	17 (22.4%)	93 (23.1%)
Column Total	120 (29.9%)	145 (36.1%)	61 (15.2%)	76 (18.9%)	402 (100.0%)

N.S.

TABLE 6.51

Distribution of North Carolina College Students Expected to Pass a General Examination Before Graduating by Status Group

	Black Male	Black Female	White Male	White Female	Row Total
Yes	61 (50.4%)	66 (45.2%)	6 (9.7%)	11 (14.1%)	144 (35.4%)
No	26 (21.5%)	39 (26.7%)	49 (79.0%)	48 (61.5%)	162 (39.8%)
Don't Know	34 (28.1%)	41 (28.1%)	7 (11.3%)	19 (24.4%)	101 (24.8%)
Column Total	121 (29.7%)	146 (35.9%)	62 (15.2%)	78 (19.2%)	407 (100.0%)

N.S.

About the Author

Rodney J. Reed (Ph.D. University of California, Berkeley) is currently professor of Educational Administration, School of Education, University of California, Berkeley. His teaching and research focuses on school leadership and management, human resources management, and educational equity for minority students, faculty, and staff at all levels of education. Dr. Reed has been actively involved in a number of professional and civic organizations and has served as an educational consultant at local, state, and federal levels. He is presently directing a California statewide research-based project entitled " Shaping Teacher Expectations for Minority Students" which is designed to improve the academic performance of black public school students. He is founder and director of the Institute for School Administrators at the University of California, which is now in its ninth year. Dr. Reed serves on several editorial boards of scholarly and professional journals and has published widely. He is co-author (with James W. Guthrie) of Educational Administration and Policy, Effective Leadership for American Education and Peer Tutoring Programs for Educationally Disadvantaged Students.

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